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CHRIST IN THE SILENCE



C. F. ANDREWS



THE ABINGDON PRESS
NEW YORK CINCINNATI CHICAGO

ANDREWS
CHRIST IN THE SILENCE

Theology Library

SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
AT CLAREMONT
California

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TO MY DEAR FRIEND
JOHN WHITE
OF
MASHONALAND
WHO HELPED ME BY HIS
CHRISTIAN LOVE AND FELLOWSHIP
TO WRITE THIS BOOK

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Beloved, let us love one another:
For love is of God;
And everyone that loveth is born of God,
And knoweth God.
He that loveth not knoweth not God;
For God is love.

—1 John 4. 7-8

PREFACE

HE words of Sénancour, "Let us keep our silent sanctuaries: for in them the eternal perspectives are preserved," might be taken as the main theme of this book. For it attempts to speak, from personal experience, concerning that inner life in Christ which has been for me the fountain head of outward speech and action. It seeks to bring the mind away from the tumult of the outer world to the "silent sanctuaries" of the Spirit, where Christ's voice alone is heard.

The request that I should undertake this new work was so earnestly and insistently brought before me that I found it at last impossible to refuse it. As soon as the duty had been accepted, an intense longing arose in my heart to seek the prayers of those who had spiritual sympathy with the object I had in view; for without their help it seemed to me impossible to go forward.

To all those, both known and unknown, who have remembered me in spirit during these months of preparation and writing I owe a debt of gratitude far greater than words can express. The response to the appeal that I made has been very wonderful indeed. One message came from an aged lady of ninety-two, weak in body but ardent in her love for Christ. She told me that she was daily praying for me that God's work might be accomplished through this book. An-

other dear friend, my cousin, who is eighty-six and blind and infirm, wrote to me in the same terms.

Equally precious, from another side of the world, was a letter from an Indian friend, telling me how he was remembering me each day in meditation. He was asking God that the book I am now writing about Christ might be a blessing to his own fellow countrymen and also to others in different lands. With such a volume of prayer behind it, how can I fail to hope and trust that this book may be used in his service?

Especially to those leaders of the Oxford Group and Student Christian Movements, who have helped and encouraged me, I am profoundly grateful. For I have longed, most of all, that this new book might serve to strengthen, in their faith and love for Christ, those of the younger generation who have listened to his voice as he speaks to us in the silence.

One name, John White, of Mashonaland, I desire specially to mention among those many friends and well-wishers who have helped me so faithfully and well. After forty years of devoted mission work in Africa, he has been privileged by his Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, to share in a higher ministry of suffering. For he has been summoned to take up his cross of illness and to bear pain, month after month, with Christian fortitude and quiet patience. Each day that I have gone to visit him we have prayed together; and this book has been the constant subject of our prayers. To be with John White in such times of heart-outpouring to God in prayer has been for

me a benediction. The sense of the nearness of Christ's presence has been with me as I have gone to and fro, seeing him each day. With deepest gratitude and affection I have dedicated this book to him.

When once the decision had been reached to write about the inner life in Christ, the great words spoken in the upper room—"Let not your heart be troubled," "Peace I leave with you," "I am the true vine," "For their sakes I consecrate myself"—came to my mind, and it was clear to me that I should take them as my main subjects. For there, in that guest chamber, Christ had kept his last communion with his disciples. He was one with them, in perfect love, and they were one with him. They had learned, in that sacred hour of friendship, the nearness of his presence, which would remain with them in every time of trial.

There is a familiar refrain in Indian village folksongs which I have often heard on the lips of peasant singers. It tells how the diver must dive down to the depths of the sea of God's love if he would bring up the pearl of great price. Saint John's Gospel contains these precious truths about Christ's own deep love for us. Only quiet prayer and silent communion with him can bring their fullness to light. But when they are at last fully and consciously realized by man's inmost heart, they abide and bear fruit. They become an intimate part of life itself. They teach us slowly and almost imperceptibly that most difficult of all lessons, which each one of us has to learn—not what to do, but how to be.

Since my words are likely to reach many readers in

of Arthur Hird as religious editor, has given me unfailing sympathy and support. Geoffrey Woledge, our librarian at Selly Oak, has also helped me with his kind aid.

Jack Hoyland, Horace Alexander, Henry Polak, Garfield Williams, and Basil Yeaxlee have generously assisted me with revision and correction of the proofs. Joan Clapham and Gertrude Newell have given me invaluable help with the typing; Agatha Harrison has also relieved me of many burdens.

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WOODBROOKE,
EASTER DAY, 1933

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Since my words are likely to reach many readers in

India who have learned to know and love me, I have felt the need of making one point clear at the outset in order to give them the clue to what I have written. The language which I have used throughout, while speaking about Christ as my Lord and Master, may possibly appear strange to many of those who have never learned to look upon Christ, from childhood, in the same personal way that I have done. To them I would offer one very simple suggestion. The pathway of *bhakti* (devotion), which is so well known in the East, will best interpret for them the form of speech I have used. For it has been along this pathway, as a Christian *Bhakta*, that my own inner life has found its true unity and completeness in the Lord Christ.

The critical question as to the authorship and composition of the fourth Gospel I have dealt with in a Note at the end. I have also concluded the book itself with a chapter on "The Practice of Prayer."

In acknowledging my indebtedness to different writers and friends, there are three books from the Middle Ages that have been my constant companions. These are the *Revelations of Divine Love*, by Mother Julian; the *Little Flowers of Saint Francis*; and *The Imitation*.

Among living writers, Rabindranath Tagore of Santiniketan, and Rendel Harris of Woodbrooke have helped me, each in his own beautiful way, both by what they have written and also by their dear personal friendship. A portrait at Woodbrooke, where they are seated together, has been continually

by my side, and has assisted me to retain the atmosphere in which such a book as this should be written.

Among the younger generation, three books have given me most valuable assistance—Doctor Nairne's *Life Eternal*, Nicholas Arseniew's *Mysticism and the Eastern Church*, and Dr. W. F. Howard's *Saint John's Gospel in Recent Criticism*.

Mahatma Gandhi, though absent in India, has been very near in spirit to me, both by his letters and personal friendship. He has interpreted, through his actions, much that I have tried to write about at first hand in this book. For in ways often difficult to understand, but amazing in their supreme sacrifice, he has shown me the meaning of that "greater love" whereof Christ speaks, when a man lays down his life for his friends.

With great affection I would record the kindness shown to me by the council and staff of Woodbrooke, Selly Oak, Birmingham, who have given me every opportunity, within their fellowship, for quiet peace and communion of spirit. In addition, my two dear friends, the wardens of Woodbrooke, Henry and Lucy Cadbury, realizing my difficulties, offered me the very great privilege of being able to stay for a time each week at their own house in the country, where I could remain alone in order to complete the work. Similar privileges have been offered me by other friends, equally dear—William and Isabel MacGregor Ross, Mrs. Du Maurier, the Rev. and Mrs. Leyton Richards, and Horace Pearson, of Tettenhall. My good helper, Leonard Cutts, who has taken the place

of Arthur Hird as religious editor, has given me unfailing sympathy and support. Geoffrey Woledge, our librarian at Selly Oak, has also helped me with his kind aid.

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INTRODUCTION

I

EARLY thirty years ago, when I had first experienced with a wonderful sense of relief the quiet atmosphere of the East after a strenuous life in the West, a deep longing came over me to find Christ in the silence as well as in the outer world. More and more an inner necessity seemed laid upon me to go away into retirement in order to learn more fully that communion with God in Christ which can only truly be felt when the spirit of man is at rest.

During my time in Delhi, when I was teaching at Saint Stephen's College, such complete quiet was very rare indeed. It only came when I went away into the hills at Kotgarh, beyond Simla, during the hot weather. In the solitude there it was possible to drink in fresh draughts of peace and thus to recover balance from the rush of the overpowering world. The mountains and valleys drew my heart out, and whenever I could leave the sultry heat of the plains in order to dwell among the hills, they formed for me a vestibule leading into the Divine Presence.

There also I met Sadhu Sundar Singh, who was still young at that time and gloriously aflame with his first love for Christ. The pure fire of his devotion to his Lord was burning brightly and its joy was

shining in his eyes. When he came out of a long period of silence, wherein Christ was his only companion, his "face was as the face of an angel." Always a born solitary, with the whole of his inner nature calm and still, he revealed to me a rare beauty of peaceful character such as I had never met before. His passionate love for Christ had enhanced the natural stillness of his own temperament. Like some deep lake, he reflected the light of Christ's presence in his countenance. He had found him in the silence.

Later on, as the years went by, my own special work called me away to very different surroundings in Bengal. For I had to pass on from crowded Delhi, which had now become the imperial capital of India, to the quiet Ashram¹ where Rabindranath Tagore had slowly built up his own religious retreat. This was called by its Sanskrit name "Santiniketan." The word denotes "the Abode of Peace," and the place does not belie its title. There, the simplest forms of natural beauty are daily companions to those who live within its precincts, and kindly human intercourse is unhurried by the rush of modern conditions.

As with Sadhu Sundar Singh, so here I found in Rabindranath Tagore himself a depth of stillness and quiet calm which I had never personally witnessed with such intensity before. His serene and beautiful spirit was a benediction, and the spacious leisure and work at the Ashram helped me to feel that I had entered a new world. Life became much more simple, and I had ample time to think out the meaning of

¹ Religious retreat.

this experience which drew me near to the heart of the East.

The Gospel story had taught me, long ago, how Christ, my Lord and Master, had remained silent in his village home, at Nazareth, during all the years of youth and early manhood. Only after he had passed the age of thirty had he set forth on his world task to establish the kingdom of God. Even then, among the multitudes by the Lake of Galilee, he had often gone apart into the desert place to rest awhile when many were coming and going. At other times he had spent the whole night on a mountaintop in prayer, when the tumult of the insistent world had become more and more oppressive.

To the weary and heavy-laden he had promised that rest of the soul which was his own perfect gift to mankind; and in his Sermon on the Mount he had set before his followers the lilies of the field and the birds of the air as an example. Their silent growth and freedom from care were to be the divine pattern for human nature as it unfolded itself in the genial atmosphere of God's love. There was a natural law which passed on into the spiritual world.

Yet this stillness of the inner spirit was, with Christ, no passive quality, unsuited for the active life of man; for, just before he had gone forth to the last agony of Gethsemane and the awful desolation of the cross, he had taken his wavering disciples apart into the quiet of the upper room where the doors were shut. He had pledged them his own inward gift of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, who should lead them into all

the truth and enable them to overcome the world. "Peace I leave with you," he had said to them in that parting hour, "my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

All this I had often read about in books of meditation, and I had constantly thought of Christ's restfulness of soul as an infinitely precious treasure. But the deep inner need of it in my own life, as a necessary complement to action itself, had not come home to me in such a way as to carry final conviction.

Now at last, in Santiniketan, a golden opportunity had come wherein I could learn these things more fully, until they sank deep down into my heart. The fever and fret of outer things had ceased for the moment to obtrude. A quiet haven had been entered and the vessel of my life had found its anchorage.

II

Even though, after this period of rest and refreshment at the Ashram, I had literally to put out to sea again and travel on many long and difficult journeys abroad to remote parts of the world, it was always with a fond and eager joy that I looked forward once more to my return. The love of friends had closely bound me to Santiniketan, and its quietness continually restored me whenever I came back to it as my home. Much of what I have attempted to write in this book had its origin during silent walks alone across its wide, open spaces, or else while I was seated under the stars in that hush before the dawn when the

stillness of nature is most deeply felt and the heart of man is awake.

Other memories have come back to my mind which pressed upon me, seeking utterance, while I was voyaging without any companion over the vast seas. For there is a solitude that is most profound of all, when at midnight, or at the break of day, the clear sky above and the still ocean below are the two immensities between which the human spirit is poised in space and time. God speaks to us out of that silence, if only our dull ears are attuned to listen in to his voice.

Thus very gradually the practice of the presence of God, with its deep and silent communion, became an abiding joy to me as my heart was more at leisure from itself. Instead of the former restlessness, a new peace came flowing in. Far beyond all human words to express it, my one supreme joy was this, that the consciousness of Christ's own living presence was brought intimately near to me with a fullness of love that I had never known before.

Just as I had felt a close companionship with Christ in the midst of human needs—among the poor and the needy, by the bedside of the sick and suffering, in the loneliness of the stranger, among the outcast and despised—so now I felt his presence in a new and living way through this deep peace which had flooded my whole being. What had been almost fugitive before became now more constant, and I longed to enter into its glorious completeness. There was a dual realization of his gracious presence, ever waiting

to be fulfilled in my own life and ever ready to be made welcome. There were the sacrament of loving service in the outer world and the sacrament of silent communion in the inner chamber of the heart.

Surely the rhythm of such a twofold movement of the spirit, while the throbbing pulse of the universe beats to and fro, goes deep down into the mystery of life itself. There is the pure joy of alternate action and repose, like an unbroken strain of music, which integrates the outer and inner life of man. It is akin to the primal harmony of God's creation, when "the morning stars sang together and the sons of God shouted for joy." For while creation itself is a glorious deed—"He spake, and it was done"—it is also said, "God rested from all his work which he had made." Only thus could it also be written, "And God saw every thing that he had made; and, behold, it was very good."

One further experience was mercifully vouchsafed to me which taught me most of all. For I was suddenly called upon to pass through the valley of the shadow of death. In a moment, the dread disease of Asiatic cholera attacked me just before night came on. It was like the "pestilence that walketh in darkness." No human aid was near at the time and it was long before a doctor could arrive. Yet Christ was intimately near me in that most desolate hour of all when I entered the dark valley, and he bade me fear no evil. When the loving help of friends came at last, in overflowing abundance, and Mr. Meek of the American Methodist Mission, ministering to me, asked

me if I would wish to be buried in the quiet church-yard of the Mission, I was already longing, with the last gleam of consciousness, "to depart and be with Christ, which is far better."

Though I had lost the power of speech, I made the sign of assent to Mr. Meek's question. For many days the awareness of any outward thing was only fitful, while I hovered between life and death. Yet the inner peace remained. The human love of Rabindranath Tagore himself, who was with me, and the deep affection of a village student and a Mohammedan *khansamah*, who served me in my pain, brought very near indeed to me the love of Christ himself, my Good Shepherd. For he was ever by my side comforting and supporting me. The veil of outward things had become so thin that I could almost see him face to face.

Out of that intermediate state of death in life and life in death, through which I had passed for many days, I awoke at last into a new world. Old things had passed away and much of my former restlessness had gone. For when mortal weakness had reached its utmost limit, God's immortal strength had been revealed.

Very slowly indeed, during the long time of silent waiting till vital energy returned, my nature became transformed from within and I knew a deeper quietness and peace. The touch of the unseen and the eternal was upon me, and those who met me were conscious of a change, though they might not be fully aware of what had taken place. For the perspective

of outward things had altered, and the unseen world was nearer to me than it had been before.

III

It will be necessary to go back again in these recollections in order to make one point absolutely clear.

Quiet communion with Christ in the daily life, as the supreme need, had never been absent from my mind in earlier years. From the time of my conversion onward this communion with Christ in the silence had always been accepted as one of the first axioms of the Christian life, but it had never been fully learned by heart in such a way as to become part of my inner being. I had tried to keep regularly a morning hour apart for devotion. The daily Eucharist had been the prelude of each day's work, and I had known in it the joy of his presence. Nevertheless, while this had been my greatest safeguard against absorption in mere activity, the sense of haste had penetrated whatever occupation I had to carry on in the outer world, till it seemed to belong to the very air I breathed. The value that I placed on getting things done was altogether excessive.

Once, in the hurry and rush to reach in time the college chapel at Cambridge for the early-morning service, I had suddenly fainted and fallen down headlong on the stone steps, in the sacred building itself, to the great alarm of all present. This was owing to my folly in racing at full speed even to the house of God. Such an occurrence as this sobered me and the shock was effective for a time. For it made me think

over the true meaning of the spiritual life, and I could foresee what kind of unstable character I was forming within. But the whirl of continual activity soon began over again, and I would hurry from one engagement to another and almost take pride in the amount of "work" accomplished.

Along with this dissipation of energy there had ensued a nervous physical strain which tended to undermine the serenity of what I tried to do. Thus the whole work suffered. Each effort became painfully forced and unworthy of Christ's acceptance. For he had made the highest demand of all—that the children of God should be perfect even as their Father in heaven was perfect. They should have no anxious care for the morrow, because their Heavenly Father cared for them with a boundless love.

It ought to have been possible, in the light of that love of the Father, to rise above the cares of the world into this higher region of peace. But that was beyond me during those younger days when each busy hour was overladen with work.

The keen climate of the North in Europe and America, where the Christian faith has left its deepest mark on human history, tends continually to react against this balanced and composed harmony of rest and action. Action has taken an excessively prominent place, until quiet has been driven into a corner. But the fault ought not to remain uncorrected. For however noble and imposing may be the Christian fabric upreared, the foundations are not truly laid. The base itself is not secure. Sooner or later a crack

will run through the whole structure. "If a house," says Christ, "be divided against itself, that house cannot stand."

Thus, although we may find much that is congenial to our own temperament in Christ's stress upon action, it would be a fatal error to dwell only on this side of his character and miss altogether his voice speaking to us in the silence.

The servant is not greater than his Master. If Christ himself, as we have seen, retired and went apart, even in the midst of his most beneficent healing work, in order to restore the balance of his own nature, how can we, who sincerely profess to be his disciples, allow ourselves to be caught up in the vortex of modern speed without any pause or retreat? If we insist on doing so, we are bound to pay for it a very terrible price. He will seek entrance at the door of our hearts and our ears will be too occupied with the din and noise of the world to hear his pleading.

There are those, far less favorably situated than I was, who appear to have no choice in these matters. I know very well, for instance, the crowded homes of the poor in the London slums. Such conditions, which cannot be escaped from by many people, make the whole life one dull, drab routine, with incessant unrest and lack of peace. There are also certain duties, such as the constant care of the sick and dying, which have to be carried through to the end without any pause or rest. In my own mother's life, with her very large family of children, the day's work seemed never ending. Yet she never complained, and she

kept her inward peace in spite of it all; for there are compensations in such cases which God freely gives. He never lays upon us a burden too heavy for us to bear, and he knows all our sorest needs.

The way to find this inward peace, in the midst of difficulties, will come before us when we study our Lord's words concerning his own peace, which he leaves with us as his parting gift. "These things," he says, "I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."

But such exceptions as these should never be used to excuse instances like my own, where I had the full opportunity for quiet if I had wished to take it, but did not realize till too late how badly and hurriedly I had been doing the work which Christ himself had given me to do.

IV

When in later years I returned to the West, after a very long absence, the first thing that struck me at once on every side was a still greater aggravation of the restless haste which I had remembered before I went away. The pace at which human life was being carried forward had become almost terrifying to one who came direct from the outside. I can vividly remember taking with me through the London traffic one who had never seen such traffic before. After a time his whole body was quivering with nervous excitement, though he was naturally strong and brave. Such, to a lesser degree, was my own per-

sonal experience. What was still more ominous was the fact that the farther I traveled west, the faster had the frantic rush become. In America it seemed to have reached its utmost limit.

The thrill and excitement of this new speed of human activity which science has so marvelously achieved had its own attraction for me. The enthusiastic absorption in rapid motion soon tingled in my blood. It vividly brought back to me, for a time, the rare buoyancy of youth; and I had no wish to belong to sour and crabbed age, which loses its delight in what is young. There was a reckless daring abroad which pressed on into a new era of progress. All this high courage and faith in the future had clearly its own place in the kingdom of God. Its call was clamorous and insistent. How could I churlishly refuse it?

But there was a strained look upon faces where peace ought to have had its throne. The loss of balance in those who had forced the pace to the bitter end was ominously plain. There was also a heart emptiness when the fever had burned itself out.

As one who had dwelt in another world of space and time in the East, it was possible for me more keenly to appraise what was taking place in Europe and America. The values that I had learned to attach to things in Santiniketan were strangely different from those that I saw everywhere accepted in the West. When, therefore, the temptation came strongly back to me to plunge into the stream and swim with the current, the haunting memory of

Christ's words rang in my ears: "What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

This stark danger-signal of Christ is not the warning of caution uttered to check the indiscretions of intemperate youth. It is, rather, his agonized cry of pain, when he sees the most priceless gift that a man has—his higher nature—being dragged down and trampled in the dust.

The East has its own dangers to the life of the soul, which I had felt with equal intensity while residing in India. But these will be dealt with later.²

v

It was in the midst of cross-currents of thought such as these that I had written my earlier book, *What I Owe to Christ*. In it I had purposely dwelt rather on the outward and objective side of my own Christian experience. I had also appealed to the energizing joy of youth as a gift gloriously meet for the Master's use.

Then, quite unexpectedly, letters began to come in to me from many lands such as I had only rarely received before. For what I had written about my own life had struck a responsive chord in the hearts of unknown men and women all over the world whose needs were very much the same as mine. Thus, almost unawares, a new "ministry of reconciliation" had opened out to me which involved very great

² See Chap. XV, p. 249.

responsibility. Correspondence of this personal character grew every day more pressing, and invitations to speak came pouring in which were often most difficult to answer.

All this gave a new direction to my thoughts. Where, hitherto, I had been thinking in terms of the East, I was now plunged into some of the most perplexing problems of the West. There came before me the nervous spiritual suffering which tortured humanity was going through, often more unendurable than even the hard physical misery that was so painfully apparent. Thus I was compelled to look more and more deeply into the abyss of spiritual unrest which had been the fatal legacy of the fratricidal war of 1914-18. There was evidently a suppurating disease at the heart of Western civilization, draining its life blood, which only the infusion of a new life-giving spirit could stanch and heal.

One insistent appeal ran through the letters I received. It was urged upon me again and again that I should go forward still deeper into my subject and explain in another book how the inner life of prayer and communion with Christ could be sustained. "Your title is wrong," said one impatient correspondent; "you haven't really told us yet what you owe to Christ, but only described your active life in the world. What we want you to tell us now is your inner life. For that is what you really owe to Christ."

In the same strain came a letter from America: "Will you not explain to us more about your inner experience, which was behind your outward activi-

ties? My own spiritual nature is so starved that prayer is actually becoming a burden to me and I never seem to find time for quiet."

Another correspondent touched my heart very deeply. "We want you," he wrote, "to tell us how you were able to keep a quiet joy in the midst of all the turmoil of your active life. We want you to explain just this one thing and nothing else; for it is all important. We are wearing ourselves out as we run to and fro in search of something we cannot find. We still hear in the church on Sunday the words, 'Come unto me, ye weary, and I will give you rest.' But they have almost ceased to carry the music in them which they had long ago. We have hardly time to listen, except to the radio, as life rushes past. One sensation follows another. The pace is killing our souls."

Letters and sayings such as these which I have summarized briefly above moved me by their evident sincerity and earnest frankness. My first impulse was to accept without hesitation the appeal they made to me to write further. But I had already noticed, with anxious foreboding, the attraction which this outward active life of the West had for me immediately on my return to it, in spite of all the resolutions I had made. The fact that a craving for it still existed in me made me wonder whether the true message of Christ had yet come home with that transparent clearness which alone can give a satisfying answer.

The vivid memory comes back to my mind of one

evening in New York when a small group of leading Christian men and women of the younger generation had gathered together in a drawing-room and I was seated with them. One of them said to me, with startling abruptness, "Don't tell us about India; teach us how to pray."

How abysmal the void was which that demand revealed I was able to discover as we went on far into the night speaking together about fundamentally necessary things, such as prayer and communion with God and the need of Christ's presence in the inner life of man. There is an atrophy of the spirit as well as of the body, and lack of use had made these truths almost dead. It was clear to me that night that the very foundation of the life in Christ would have to be renewed if the main structure were to be preserved and restored.

On such matters as these I should have to write directly from my own experience. There must be nothing secondhand. So I had to sit down and count the cost before taking up the work which was being laid upon me to do. If one builds a tower, Christ tells us, it is wise first of all to reckon up whether the fund in hand is sufficient to complete the work. This thought troubled me a very great deal. But there is an equally serious responsibility incurred if any true gift which Christ himself has bestowed is withheld from the service of others.

Clearly, my own personal experience of quiet in the East, under exceptionally favorable conditions, had been a gift from God of a peculiar character such as

very few in the crowded and hurried West could ever hope to receive; though the loss might be made up to them, in his goodness, in other ways. If I had remained at home in England, I might hardly have known such a gift at all. Therefore the opportunity which had been mine could not be without its own meaning and purpose.

There is a strangely moving passage in the book of Esther, where the Jewish people in exile are about to be massacred by royal decree and Esther stands in a unique position to save them. Mordecai at this critical juncture sends Esther a message, "Who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

Here was I, placed by the divine love in a singularly favorable position to help others. What was I to do? When men and women were so clearly seeking from me something that they needed in their own spiritual hunger and thirst, it was self-evident that whatever I had to offer must be freely placed at their service.

VI

So I argued within. But as yet the fire had not been kindled which would make what I wrote a burning message.

But God, whose mercies are boundless, made the way straight before my feet and guided me in each step of the upward path. For during the months of July and August, 1932, when I had made all my plans to leave England and go abroad for a much-needed

rest during which I might begin to prepare my new book, I was suddenly called upon to pass through far darker regions of pain, both mental and spiritual, than I had ever met with before. For I had to watch, day after day, by the bedside of a young Indian student in Germany who had been stricken down in the very prime of youth by a rapid advance of tuberculosis. Every circumstance which surrounded the illness was desperately tragic, far beyond anything that mere words can express. It is impossible to explain here how sad things were. He had been brought with very great difficulty to a sanatorium in the Black Forest, but the ravages of disease had already advanced very far and there was little hope of any permanent cure.

It is quite possible in the hardening convention of everyday active life to be brought into the midst of heart-breaking tragedies such as these without feeling intensely the momentous spiritual issues involved. This has very often been true in my own case. But now I was already overwrought and nervously strained. The new demand upon every spiritual power of sympathy that I possessed came to me as a burden that had daily to be borne; and soon I found that I was compelled to face therein, not only this intolerable suffering of one so young, but the wider suffering of mankind.

The crucial pain, which seems to be at the heart of Creation, was forced upon my imagination by the suffering of this young life and that of others in this sanatorium. Nature in all her perfect beauty was

around me. The weather was the most lovely autumn weather. Yet here, at the heart of all, was agonizing suffering, unrelieved and unrelievable—cruel, monstrous, unmerited. The very beauty of the dreaming forest and the blue sky made the tragedy itself more complete.

Thus I was brought along the road that had led Christ, my Lord and Master, to the cross, and I realized more than ever before what he had suffered. Week after week the long-drawn misery went on and the tragedy deepened. My whole head and heart became sick and the brain reeled. The physical and spiritual tension combined was almost more than I could bear. Yet there was the daily need of cheerfulness. It was incumbent on me to comfort and sustain others while the deepest faith in God and man at the basis of my own life was strained to its very foundation.

But the foundations held. The love of Christ, which could never be shaken, remained steadfast to the end. His own still voice within the soul whispered peace; and out of the tempest hour of that affliction I was able to learn by heart more of the true meaning of the cross than I had ever known before in quiet seasons of fair weather when all around was calm.

At last, when merciful death had laid its hand and the tired body was at rest, then with wonderful power I experienced anew the resurrection life. Old truths concerning Christ's redeeming love through the cross, and his rising in the glorious fullness of an

endless life to heal and to bless mankind, blossomed again in my heart. Along with them I found to my exceeding joy a new inner strength to comfort and help others. For, after the hurricane had passed over me and the deep waters had well-nigh overwhelmed me, the dear presence of my Lord and Master came like sunshine into my life, filling it once more with gladness.

VII

From the Black Forest I passed on to Ermatingen, a village on the shore of Lake Constance in Switzerland, near the German border.

At that center, toward the middle of August, 1932, many of the leaders in the Oxford Group Movement, with their friends, had assembled for communion and prayer. They were seeking with all their hearts to realize together, in the quiet of those peaceful surroundings, a fuller vision of God's love in Christ, as it embraced the whole world within its range. Some of my own dear companions were there, and Mrs. Alexander Whyte, who had been like a mother to me, had asked me earlier in the year to be her guest at this gathering.

But after that terrible ordeal which I had just passed through my whole nature was crying out for solitude. Therefore I was almost afraid at first to go to an entirely new place, where I should meet, in eager friendly company, the old familiar faces. Yet there were very special reasons which made me finally determine to go, and this deeper instinct proved to

be a true one. For I found there both the solitude which I so badly needed and also a wonderful refreshment of spirit. Above all I came into glowing contact with those whose first experience of the love of Christ had turned their whole life into a song. The peace of Lake Constance itself, as I watched it hour after hour from a quiet, lonely spot overlooking its still waters, was a healing influence. By a natural reversal of thought, the lake with its surrounding hills brought my mind away from the last dread act of the Passion outside Jerusalem to the bright dawn of Christ's early ministry on the shores of Galilee, where the first young disciples were called one by one to follow their Lord. We seemed at Ermatingen to have come once more to the fresh vision of those early days. The radiance of the Christian faith had been restored.

For the Group Movement had become in very truth a movement of Youth. The whole atmosphere in this quiet retreat was overflowing with a new spirit. Christ was being born anew in a new age. The contagion of happy laughter around me, so free from pious convention, brought with it at that time an indescribable sense of relief after the dark background of the past weeks. The simple directness of approach to God, as a child approaches its father or mother in absolute trust, seeking guidance, was a joy to me to witness. The enkindling enthusiasm of ardent devotion to Christ as Master and Lord, which was everywhere present, dispersed the last shadow of lingering gloom from my own mind. All things seemed to

have become possible to the eye of faith in this newer and younger world.

VIII

My thoughts, in such surroundings, naturally went back again to the book which I had set out on my journey to write. It could not be any longer postponed. The strong impulse to write was now present in fullest measure, and the subject was already prepared.

On a very quiet evening, while I sat watching the sunset reflected in the silent waters of the lake, one central thought became luminous. It was this: The book I was to write must meet the needs, not of the older generation only, but also of the younger students and workers all over the world. They were even now preparing with a splendid courage to face the vast upheaval of the age in which they lived, as they realized within themselves Christ's power afresh. God willing, I must help them just there.

For once more the word of God had gone forth, "I will shake the heavens and the earth."

There had already begun "a removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain." Among the things which could not possibly be shaken was this abiding and sustaining love of Christ, which had been with me during the hours of darkness. If I could only, by his goodness, make plain to others what this love of Christ had meant to me, then I should not have labored in vain. The

great words of the Apocalypse, "And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new," seemed about to be proclaimed from on high once more for all the world to hear. Each speaker in turn at Ermatingen had brought before our minds this radiant vision of a new heaven and a new earth "wherein dwelleth righteousness."

Freely I had received, all my life, from those who were young. The student world had always been my world, and they were nearest to my heart. Here at Ermatingen they were all around me, and my thoughts went out to them with deep, tender affection. Freely, therefore, I must seek to give to them in return, if only health and leisure were allowed me to accomplish the work I had now in view.

The book I had to write must tell of Christ in the inmost heart. It would be called *Christ in the Silence* —not, indeed, the silence of a cold, unimpassioned calm which had never faced danger and defeat, but the silence of Him who could say to his own disciples in the upper room, just before he went out to the cross, "These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."

Such glorious words as these would form the background of the picture which I longed to draw of Christ, my Lord and Master, as he entered upon the last dread struggle. For there, in the silence, he had invited his own disciples to share to the uttermost his sacrifice, giving them the assurance of his abiding

presence with them. He was one with them and they were one with him in joy and sorrow alike. His Spirit would abide with them forever and lead them into all the truth.

There is one very simple story which I have kept in my mind from early childhood. It has clung to me in a singular way and therefore may be repeated here. It tells of a poor crippled invalid who could never move from her couch. But her face was always bright and her life radiantly happy in spite of continual pain. The central words of Christ in Saint John's Gospel were her daily food. She would repeat them over and over again when she suffered. A small copy of the Gospel was always by her side, bound in a blue cover. She called it her "little blue John."

In the same way, when my whole life was surrendered to Christ, this Gospel began to mean more to me personally than any other part of the New Testament, and these chapters containing the last words of Jesus to his disciples were its inner shrine. During the years that I spent among the poor in Sunderlang and Walworth this Gospel was always carried with me. It soon became clear to me that it was the favorite book among those I visited, and I was never tired of reading the old familiar words, which ever remained gloriously new. Gradually I realized that they had formed a sanctuary in my own heart to which I continually returned. The invalid's life on her couch with her "little blue John" and my active life in the world were so different. Yet here we were one.

Another dear memory connected with these words in those earlier days is most sacred. For Charles Prior, my tutor and friend at Cambridge, during his last illness used to ask me to read from these chapters. He spoke to me of the peace and comfort which had come to him in his pain at the thought of Christ the true Vine. He also would tell me with touching humility of the wonder of Christ's saying, "I have called you friends."

The thoughts which have come to me from Saint John's Gospel since I went out to the East have gone deeper still. For there this Gospel has its true home in the hearts of men and is best understood. There, face to face with the eternal beauty of the Himalayan Mountains, amid the snows, and later on when I wandered over the open country at Santiniketan, I would often keep the refrain of those words, "Peace I leave with you," close to my heart, till they seemed to sink into my very being, releasing the human spirit from the outer world of sense and time.

Memories such as these have crowded one upon another in my own life, and therefore what I am now seeking to set down in this book will not be of recent consideration only, but will carry with it the thought and dreams of very many years. My earnest prayer as I write is this—that I may be enabled by God's grace to take my readers with me into this inner sanctuary where I have myself found joy and peace.

IX

Now, as I look back over what I have written in

order to add these concluding words, my mind misgives me, for the days in which I have tried hard to write with peace and quietness have been outwardly full of grave trouble and unrest. Whenever I have gone apart, in order to get the necessary leisure to write, some urgent message has come in from India, or some call has reached me from London, which has immediately required all my care and attention. Sadly, the work I was engaged in had to be laid aside. It could hardly be otherwise, for the whole world to-day is jarred and out of tune.

Yet the very fact that I have striven earnestly to retain inward peace during such an untoward time has kept me closely in touch with numberless, struggling people whose lives are passed under far harder conditions than my own. They also are seeking with deep concern to hold fast to the eternal things in life in spite of the strong current running against them. My one longing is that through constant sympathy with them, in the very difficulties which they are so bravely facing, I may be able to help them in their struggle.

For we are building up the walls of our Jerusalem to-day, like those who built so steadfastly of old, with enemies to our peace on every side ready to take us unawares. "The builders," thus it is written, "every one had his sword girded by his side, and so builded. . . . So we labored in the work; and half of them held the spears from the rising of the morning till the stars appeared."³

³ Nehemiah 4. 18, 21.

The peace we seek in Christ is not easily won. Our loins must be girt about and our lamps burning, as those who watch for their Lord. The Master of the house may come at even, or at midnight, or at the cock crowing, or in the morning. The crisis of his advent is always imminent, and only by a ceaseless watch shall we be able to endure to the end and in patience win our souls.

CHAPTER I

THE GUEST CHAMBER

“And ye shall say unto the goodman of the house, The Master saith unto thee, Where is the guest chamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples? And he shall show you a large upper room furnished: there make ready.”

ONE very distinct recollection is still fresh in my mind to-day of an incident that happened nearly forty years ago in London. Canon R. L. Ottley, of Oxford, conducted a retreat for quiet prayer and meditation in the Southwark Diocese shortly after I had been ordained to work at the Pembroke College Mission in Walworth. It was an opportunity for a quiet time of communion with God that I very badly needed. For, though the daily routine at the College Mission was full of joy and gladness, and I loved intensely the work among the poor, nevertheless an ever-increasing restlessness had come into my life which became more and more difficult to control. Therefore I welcomed with great expectation this retreat and looked forward to its restful aid.

Canon Ottley had come down specially from Oxford to speak to us, and this was the first time I had ever seen him. There is a dim impression in my mind that we all met together in the Lady Chapel at Southwark Cathedral, near to London Bridge, but

In his second address Canon Ottley went on to speak of the deep inward peace which the Lord Jesus had promised to his own faithful disciples as they forsook all earthly gain and followed him unto the end. Here again it was the face of the speaker, looking into our faces, which made plain to us the main subject of his teaching. For he had clearly known that inward peace himself, about which he spoke, and had lived in the presence of Christ his Lord.

He told us how our own troubled hearts could be stilled into perfect serenity even in the midst of outward suffering and sorrow. The one thing needful was that we should find this peace in Christ our Saviour himself. For then it never failed. Jesus must be our Divine Teacher. We must learn each day, through the inner discipline of love, the one secret of single-hearted obedience to his will. "All other things," he said, "may fail us; but in his will is our peace."

As he quoted these concluding words from Dante's great epic, he paused and repeated them a second time, more slowly than before. Then he gave us the benediction. The light of the divine love of Christ his Master was shining in his eyes as he said the words of blessing: "The peace of God which passeth all understanding keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God and of his Son, Christ Jesus our Lord, and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be with you now and for evermore. Amen."

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on that point I may be mistaken. For, while the words spoken by him remain fresh in my memory to-day, the outer circumstances connected with the retreat have nearly faded away.

He brought before us, as the first subject of our meditation, the verses from Saint Luke's Gospel which I have placed at the head of this chapter.

In his opening address he earnestly invited us to enter into the silence of that upper room, or guest chamber, where Jesus had made every preparation to keep the last Passover with his disciples before he suffered. He brought before us, with very deep feeling, the lowly act of the Saviour of mankind when he poured water into a basin and girded himself with a towel and began to wash his disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded.

Our own hearts, he said, were the guest chamber wherein Christ was to keep the Passover. We were to be his guests, and yet at the same time we were to receive him as our guest. It was a festival and yet a pledge of sacrifice, even to the bearing of the cross. We must be cleansed from all defilement, because the Lord himself was to take his throne in our hearts, so that he might abide with us forever. We must also be ready to follow him whithersoever he led the way, however difficult the path might be which he might show us. There were three things, he explained, that we must always bear in mind.

The guest chamber which the Lord had chosen was large; and we must make our hearts as wide in their embrace as God's own love itself.

It was an upper room, and we must keep our hearts above all the din and tumult of the lower world of sin and strife.

It was also furnished, and we must not leave our hearts cold and bare, but prepare in them a royal throne for our King, for he would celebrate with us his festival of joy and suffering mingled. We should receive at his hand the Cup of Blessing, which might also be the Cup of Pain. He would feed us with his Bread of Life, which would sustain us with joy, even when we faced death for his dear sake.

The speaker then went on to show us in detail the inner meaning of Christ's act of self-abasement as he began to wash his own disciples' feet; and during the time that he was telling the beautiful gospel story, with the deepest reverence and awe, the love of Christ which was filling his heart shone out in his eyes. He brought the perfect goodness of our Lord closely home to us in a way we could never forget. We seemed to see Christ through him. His own saintly appearance and quiet voice gave a deep reality to every word he uttered. All unconsciously he became himself the message which he was seeking to make clear to others. Thus Christ's presence seemed marvelously near as we knelt together in worship and sang in unison Saint Bernard of Clairvaux's hymn, with the words,

“But what to those who find? Ah, this
Nor tongue nor pen can show.
The love of Jesus, what it is,
None but his loved ones know.”

In his second address Canon Ottley went on to speak of the deep inward peace which the Lord Jesus had promised to his own faithful disciples as they forsook all earthly gain and followed him unto the end. Here again it was the face of the speaker, looking into our faces, which made plain to us the main subject of his teaching. For he had clearly known that inward peace himself, about which he spoke, and had lived in the presence of Christ his Lord.

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lence for his third address, which came in the evening after our united act of evening worship was ended.

Here, in his last meditation, he carried us over a much wider range, and I can remember its details best of all. He pointed out to us the different gradients, as it were, in the upward path which led on to the city of God. Along with deep humility and inward peace there must be entire purity of heart; for only the pure in heart could see God. Therefore the inner spirit must be made "clean every whit." This was called the "way of cleansing," or purgation, concerning which all the great mystics had spoken with one voice as the beginning of all progress. It was the primary step on the upward road that led forward to the beatific vision, the paradise of God. He described how Dante had sought to set before us in his great poem this steep ascent, which led onward to that vision and that paradise; and how his sublimely purified love for Beatrice, whom he saw with the saints in light, had drawn him at last out of his selfish life into the unclouded presence of God.

The two further steps which the mystics spoke about were called the "way of illumination" and the "way of union." But before the final stage of union was reached a time of darkness and inner bewilderment was likely to be experienced, when the aspiring human spirit seemed to have lost its way and the loving presence of God seemed to be withheld for a season. This was named by the mystics the "dark night of the soul." It was the last great trial of their

faith which came before the brightness of the dawn. For the fullness of the beatific vision was only vouchsafed to those who dared, in utter purity of heart and complete surrender of self, to climb up every step of that difficult ascent, enduring faithfully to the end.

Such was the main theme of Canon Ottley's meditations as they have remained vividly in my memory all these years. No doubt, during the long interval, much has been added to them from my own inner thoughts, but the substance was his.

Let me say here, in parenthesis, that very little had been done, when Canon Ottley gave these addresses, to familiarize English readers with the central ideas of that glorious mystical tradition of Christendom which begins with Saint Paul's own words, "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." Yet its ever-repeated influence has been profound. It has included such names as those of Saint Augustine and his mother, Saint Monica; Saint Bernard and Saint Francis; Saint Theresa and Mother Julian of Norwich; Saint John of the Cross and the author of *The Imitation*; Henry Suso and Master Eckhart; George Fox and Jacob Boehme; Fénelon and Pascal. Very little was known also, forty years ago, concerning the long line of saints and martyrs in the orthodox Eastern Church, where this mystical tradition has been even stronger than in the West.

Nor had the remarkably deep religious life outside the bounds of Christendom received its full recognition on its mystical side, until Rabindranath Tagore's *Gitanjali*, with the poet's beautiful English transla-

tion, suddenly revealed it to the Western world in the year 1912. Since then we have learned to find, in this inner spiritual experience of all the saints, a world-wide movement of religious thought and life which is one of the greatest treasures of the human race.

As I listened with rapt attention at the close of the retreat to Canon Ottley's quiet words, while the daylight faded away and evening came on, he opened up for me a new world of spiritual vision and illumination. This accounts, perhaps, for the very deep impression he left upon me, which has remained with me right up to this day. For I can still picture the whole scene vividly while I write about it.

But though I gave, in this manner, very great heed to what Canon Ottley had said, and my thinking life was profoundly influenced thereby, yet the inward effect was not sufficiently marked at the time to change the whole outward routine of daily life which had long grown up with me. The rush and hurry of getting through an ever-increasing amount of work still obsessed me. Old habits had become far too firmly rooted to be easily shaken.

I can remember one of my older friends saying to me on an earlier occasion: "Charlie, you have a good way of going *at* things." That might be true; but he did not realize what an amount of nervous energy was wasted in the process and how futile were many of the things that were attempted.

The truth was really this: that, so far from modifying the course I had hitherto pursued, my days

tended to become even more filled up with work, until my own prayer-life suffered grievous harm. Quiet was literally crowded out. Even when I went back to Cambridge, in order to take up University teaching work, the same overpressure and overstrain continued. How seriously harmful the result was I have already described.¹ It was my own grievous fault, and I have suffered much in consequence, even up to the present time. There is no excuse that can be offered for it.

Yet the fact remained that I had now seen, through Canon Ottley's eyes, a new vision of reality. It had come before me in a living, spiritual way, through a remarkable personality, and it could not be put aside. This made me more and more dissatisfied with the continual round of multiplying engagements, each of which appeared at the moment to be vitally important. Seed thoughts had been sown, but they were slow to take root and grow up in the environment of our intensely active Western life. The blossoming-time, with its fruitage, came later, in the more congenial climate of the East; for in those Eastern surroundings the slow unhurried movement of daily life, especially at Santiniketan, gave much fuller opportunity for development.

But while there was failure on the practical side for the time being there was one immediate blessing for which I can never be too thankful; for after Canon Ottley's addresses, I had the joy of returning frequently, with fresh enthusiasm and devotion, to these

¹ See Introduction, p. 24.

great farewell chapters in Saint John's Gospel. I found through their aid an ever closer touch with the living Christ whom I loved and worshiped. They brought me to the very heart of the New Testament, and I continually went back to them for the renewal of the inner life in Christ.

A practice grew up by slow degrees of turning to these chapters in Saint John each morning for the central subject of meditation during the quiet time after the Eucharist, before the rush of the day's work began. Indeed, this became so much a part of my life that these verses of Saint John have become far more familiar to me than any other part of the New Testament. They have been so often studied that it is easy for me now to close my eyes and repeat them to myself on a train journey, or during some part of the working day when quiet is needed and the strain of outward things has become oppressive. There have been also long hours of the night, especially in India, when sleep has been difficult. At such times the very hush of their words of peace has brought calmness to the troubled spirit. Perhaps the greatest of all these experiences is to go out into some deep solitude of nature—some hillside where one can be quite alone, or a retired and secluded spot away from all noise of traffic—and enter into the spirit of the gospel words, letting the very beauty of their sound bring to me by degrees an inner harmony with the silent beauty of nature around.

More and more I began to associate these verses in a peculiar way with the revealing of Christ's pres-

ence. Christ spoke to me in them with a living power, and I was able to speak to him. At this point in my story I have not been afraid to go over the same theme, because here is the very heart and center of all that I am trying to make plain. In my newfound joy while reading this Gospel, I did not realize at first what an austere self-discipline the fulfillment of its teachings would imply, and what a complete surrender of my own will to the will of Christ, even in the smallest details of daily life. But that was to come later.

In India there is a very profound religious ceremony, which takes place at the time of adult age, when anyone is initiated into the deeper meaning of spiritual life. At that propitious moment the teacher whispers in silence some sacred text, or *mantram*, into the ear of the young initiate, which will remain in his mind as a lifelong possession. Thus it becomes a guiding light to his soul throughout all succeeding years and a deep solace in the hour of death. A wise spiritual teacher will be able thus to choose a single great text which may make a marked impression upon the whole career of his disciple. Hindu friends have often told me what a precious possession such a text has been, to bear in mind continually and dwell upon in the silence.

Saint John's Gospel—especially in these farewell chapters—began to offer to me in my own spiritual life its great leading thoughts. The words of Jesus, "I am the way, the truth and the life," "I am the true vine," "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto

you," were living words, and as I repeated them they seemed to bring with them the presence of the Lord whom I worshiped. It is very difficult to explain this with any distinctness, for it is a spiritual experience and I am not sure if I can make it plain to others. But it made all the difference to me personally. It gave me joy and peace in the midst of outward confusion and strife.

Let me confess at once with the utmost clearness possible, in order to avoid misunderstanding, that in all these things of the spirit about which I am writing I am still a learner rather than a teacher. For I have only been able to learn through constant failure. Again and again, as some new light has dawned where things seemed quite dark before, I have remembered these words of Saint Ignatius, "Now I am beginning to be a disciple." He wrote that great sentence in one of his letters on the way to Rome, where he was to suffer martyrdom in the arena. But in the lesser things of ordinary daily life I have found out continually where true discipleship has to be learned afresh. Therefore, what I long for more than anything else, while writing this book, is that, together with my readers and with those who have been remembering me in their prayers, we may all draw closer to Christ himself, whose living presence with us through his Spirit can teach us all things and bring to remembrance all things whatsoever he has told us.

Let us, then, enter the guest chamber together in order to meet him; or, rather, let us invite him to

enter the guest chamber of our own hearts. We are to hold communion with him in the silence, when the doors are shut and the noise of the outer world is hushed. We are to find out from him by prayer and inner fellowship the secret of his own peace. At every point we shall return to these words of Saint John's Gospel, where he himself speaks to us, and we shall keep his own words open before us as we read on.

No interpretation given in this book can be of any avail unless it sends us back to the Gospel itself for personal study and inquiry. For this reason I would suggest that, while this volume is being read, a copy of Saint John's Gospel should be by the side of the reader and these last farewell words of our Lord should be constantly thought over and remembered. The mere perusal of what I have written is of no value at all unless it leads us back to Christ himself, our Lord and Master, for his own inspiration and guidance.

For the one great expectation of our hearts must be to find him whom our souls desire and to answer his call when he speaks to us in the silence. We shall often discover that what may then be required of us, as we ask him the question, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" will not be any further immediate action, but, rather, patient waiting and quiet confident trust; and his very first words to our troubled hearts may bear the message, "Be still, and know that I am God."

Let me venture to mention one personal experi-

ence which may illustrate what I am trying hard to express.

For some reason or other, possibly physical at its base, I have suffered acutely at certain times during the later years of my life from a mental anxiety concerning others which it seems almost impossible for the time being either to control or suppress when it comes suddenly upon me. It brings with it unmeaning fears and a troubled mind. As long as it lasts the strain on the nerves is acute. For many years this had seemed to be growing worse, and it had crippled me in many ways. But it is possible now to look back and say with thankfulness that it has been partly overcome; and an inner strength has been given me from the presence of Christ in my daily life which has constantly raised my thoughts above it and beyond it and thus released the strain. For always, in the guest chamber, when Christ enters he brings good cheer, he speaks the word of peace. He takes away even these formless fears and sets the heart at rest.

Among those who read these pages, in many different lands, there may be some who have had a burden of anxiety to carry similar to my own. For their sakes I have ventured to write about such a personal matter as this. If what I have said helps to point the way to them to find relief, I shall be thankful indeed. For it is surely by thus helping, in however small a degree, to bear one another's burdens, that we fulfill the law of Christ.

CHAPTER II

THE WASHING OF THE FEET

"Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God; he riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments: and took a towel, and girded himself. After that he poureth water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded."

OHERE is a remarkable similarity of emphasis in all the Gospels on each detail of the preparation made by our Lord himself for his last farewell communion with his disciples before he suffered.

The guest chamber in which they should meet must be free from all outward disturbance and full of inward peace. Jesus had sent two of his chosen disciples, Peter and John, beforehand to prepare everything and to make ready for the Last Supper. All the deepest longings of his heart during that week of conflict with the dark forces around him seem to have become more and more centered in this final act of love. "With desire," he had said to them, "I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer."

In the great mystical writers who have described to us the pathway of the inner life, the first approach is

represented as "the way of cleansing." In the Beatitudes it is made clear to us that only the pure in heart are able to see God; and we know well that the one indispensable thing for such inward purity is to be lowly of heart and contrite in spirit. "Blessed," says Jesus, "are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth." Only with such a strong foundation as this, a foundation of meekness and lowliness of heart, can the divine purity, which comes from God himself, find its dwelling place in the soul of man, banishing all selfishness and lust, insincerity and untruth.

When Jesus, our Lord and Master, invites us to come to him and learn from him about his own character, he chooses this one characteristic above all others: "Learn of me," he says; "for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls." Only by learning in the depth of our own hearts that lowliness and meekness which is his own divine character can we enter into his kingdom.

Self-seeking and Christ-seeking cannot go together. We cannot ask God to transform our lives with his own presence if we are determined not to surrender them completely for his service. The disciples who were present in the upper room with our Lord had been marvelously loyal hitherto, but now the strain had nearly reached its breaking point. One of them would soon betray Jesus, and all of them would forsake him. Only one—the Beloved Disciple—would

return and be with him at the last, standing at the foot of the cross. Four faithful women would be there, more faithful than the men; but only one man's love would be strong enough to continue steadfast unto death.

Therefore it was supremely necessary for the Master to begin the teaching of his lowly way of suffering by a dramatic act which should embody for all time, in a simple parable, the one lesson that was hardest for the disciples to learn—the lesson of humility.

Saint Luke's earlier account gives us a part of the same story and helps us to understand still more clearly why Jesus rose from the supper table itself, and stooped down to wash the feet of the disciples; and it is necessary to study closely at this point what he records, along with the record in Saint John. For we read how, in that hushed guest chamber, even after the solemn communion meal had been received and the Lord's foreboding concerning his Passion had been uttered, there was a strife among them as to who should be accounted the greatest.¹

The tragic irony of such a strife of self-seeking, occurring at this solemn hour, in the very guest chamber, cannot escape our notice. It shows how imperative the need had become for Jesus to explain to them by some signal example of his own wherein true greatness lay. For that evil spirit of self-seeking must be entirely banished from their midst before the new commandment of love could be effectively given and received. Saint Luke tells us one part of the story,

¹ Luke 22. 24.

Saint John's Gospel tells us another. Let us follow each in turn.

In Saint Luke's Gospel Jesus rebukes his disciples by picturing before them the neighboring governors and rulers—the “kings of the Gentiles”²—who delighted in hearing themselves called “benefactors” by flattering courtiers. Men like these took pride in exercising lordship over their subjects. But the disciples of Jesus must get rid of all such false ideas of greatness. For the most divine honor of all was to do lowly unrequited service. That was an honor claimed by God himself.

Our Lord had already taught his disciples how the Heavenly Father makes his sun to shine upon the evil and the good; how he causes his rain to fall upon the just and the unjust; how he loves those who never return his love and blesses those who revile him. Here was their pattern of perfection. However hard it might be, they were called upon to be perfect, even as their Father in heaven was perfect. He, their Lord and Master, who had taught them all these truths about God, was now among them, and they must learn from him the full, clear meaning of his teaching before he was parted from them. “Whether is greater,” he asked them, “he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as he that serveth.”

Once I used to meet, from day to day, one of the noblest of Indian saints and teachers. He had never wished to change his ancestral faith and to call him-

² Luke 22. 25.

self by Christ's name, but had remained all his life a Hindu, very devout in character and very gentle in spirit—one of the pure in heart who see God. One day I asked him, in the course of our conversation, "What do you yourself consider to be the most original and profound of all the sayings of Jesus?"

While I put to him this question my own first thought was that he would surely turn to the Beatitudes and the Sermon on the Mount, in order to take his text from these for an answer. This had so often happened in my past experience in India that I expected it now. But he did not do so. Instead of this he pointed to the passage in Saint Matthew's Gospel where the disciples come to Christ and ask him the question, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" The answer is given in these words: "And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, 'Verily I say unto you, Except ye be changed in your minds, and become like little children, ye shall not enter the kingdom of heaven. And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name, receiveth me.' "

After a pause which showed how very deeply he had been moved by the beauty of this word of Christ he turned his face to me and said: "That perfect story of Christ and the little children comes home to the heart of the East as almost nothing else does in your gospel. For India, especially, has always seen God in the innocence of the child. When we read that narrative about Jesus and his disciples, and when we go further on and find how he kept to the end this

perfect childlike innocence; how he was silent before those who reviled and persecuted him; how he offered that prayer on the cross, 'Father, forgive them,' on behalf of those who were crucifying him, we feel that we are truly witnessing a supernatural act of love. Then we understand the words of Christ, where he says, 'I and my Father are one.' But when some chapters of your Bible tell us of a God of wrath, who delights in blood and can only forgive after blood has been shed, we are inclined to turn away in disgust. For we have in our own ancient legends such blood-thirsty deities, and we are trying to expurgate them from our scriptures. Surely you too ought to do the same."

I assured him that Christ's highest mission on earth had been one long endeavor to bring to an end such wrong conceptions of God and to reveal him as the Father whose love is universal. He turned back his thoughts, which had wandered for the moment, to the passage where Christ takes the little children in his arms and blesses them.

"Cannot you see," he asked me, earnestly, "what Christ is telling you all the while in the words we have just read together? He tells you that God, whom he calls his Heavenly Father, has the heart of a little child. How true that is in human experience! You yourself have never been a father, and so you cannot fully understand it. You can only feel the truth vaguely and imperfectly. But I, who have been a father and have known what it is to carry my own son in my arms, can feel it in the very depth of my being."

After another pause, he began to speak again, continuing the same thought. "Just look," he said, "at a mother and her firstborn child. How humble she is with her baby, and what worship she gives it! She becomes like a little child to her own baby. She even talks to it in 'baby language.' And oh! what a queen! There is no queen in the whole world like a mother with her firstborn son in her arms. God's humility is like that—so royal, so lowly!"

Christ's own act of self-abasement, as he stooped down to the ground as a servant to wash his disciples' feet and wipe them tenderly with the towel wherewith he was girded, bears all the marks of that same royal lowliness of heart which was manifest when he took the little children in his arms and laid his hands on them and blessed them. It was a kingly act, fraught with love's perfect sovereignty of service. For it is ever love's way thus to stoop and to serve. "We all think of Jesus," writes Leslie Weatherhead, "when we read the words of Rabindranath Tagore, 'There is thy footstool, and there rest thy feet, where live the poorest and lowliest and lost.' For the greatest of all in his kingdom is the one who is the servant of all."³

We recognize immediately the moral beauty of such a character as that of Jesus. East and West alike bow down before his message of the child heart—the spirit of pure humility—as the one supreme need of the soul that longs to worship God in spirit and in truth. But to cleanse the heart so thoroughly from every

³ See p. 297.

thought of self that it becomes spotlessly childlike and innocent once more—this with most of us is a life-long, never-ceasing struggle wherein defeat at any moment is certain unless an overpowering love drives out from us this self-love. Only the love of Jesus is strong enough to do this in all its completeness; for his indwelling strength and constraining love can carry us past all weakness and temptation and can give us the glorious hope of ultimate victory, even in this hardest of all battles of the spirit. Gradually, as we meditate on his words and drink in the fullness of their meaning, we shall learn from his own lips the secret of his presence, and in his light shall we see light.

No one can fully understand the symbol of the washing of the disciples' feet who has not lived his life in the East and become accustomed to the Eastern ways. There is something tender beyond words in the love wherewith the teacher's feet are touched by the disciple, or a father's feet are touched by his own child, or the mother's feet by her sons and daughters. The simple act combines devotion with humility, and it enters into the daily life. No shoes are worn within the house, and the feet are bare. On this account there is a possibility of intimate touch which is quite unknown in the West. Perhaps the picture of Mary in the Gospel, as she touches the feet of Jesus with such tenderness and anoints them with the costly perfume in her devotion, may give some slight idea to us in the West of the reverence that marks this custom in the East and also its great humility.

But here, in this amazing love of Christ, the whole symbolic action is reversed. He, their Lord and their Master, has stooped down to touch the feet of his own disciples. In so doing he would show to them the same deep reverence and lowliness which they had always shown to him. Nay, more: not only would he touch their feet in all humility, but he would also bathe them and make them clean—a still lowlier act of service.

How was it possible for Peter to bear this? It would appear to him nothing less than an intolerable humiliation for his Lord and an impiety on the part of his disciples. So he cried out, with impetuous haste, "Master, thou shalt never wash my feet!" as Christ's action moved him to his heart's depth with self-abasement.

The further details cannot be dealt with here because the whole picture, with its overwhelming central thought, demands our closest attention and we must not wander away from it even for a single moment. It brings us into the very presence of the Divine Love itself, which is at the heart of the universe. For we have to think in terms of the eternal if we are to follow closely and with faith in the footsteps of the fourth evangelist. The act of stooping down to wash the disciples' feet is with him a symbol of God's own stooping down to earth in order to take the form of a servant and bring back humanity to himself.

"Jesus," we read in Saint John's record of the scene, "having loved his own which were in the world,

he loved them to the uttermost.⁴ . . . and knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God and went to God... he laid aside his garments and took a towel and girded himself."

He, the Saviour of men, was fulfilling in this act of deep humility the perfect will of God, who had given all things into his hands. He loved them to the uttermost. He came from God just to do this very thing, to show what depth of love was in the divine heart toward erring, wayward men—not vengeance, as man in his ignorance and haunting fear had conceived of God; not fiery punishment, or consuming wrath; not the exacting of blood-thirsty sacrifices: but a love so generous and profound that it would stoop as low as this; a love so insistent that it would take no denial or refusal; a love so tender that it would break down the hardest heart by its pure goodness.

For "God so loved the world." That is Saint John's message, repeated in his Gospel in a hundred ways. God himself had stooped down to the uttermost in his love for all mankind. God had girded himself, not with divine strength such as the psalmist proclaimed, but with human weakness. He had taken upon himself man's frailty in order to raise mankind out of the dust.

The apostle Paul had already written from a Roman prison in the same strain. "Let this mind be in you," he said, "which was also in Christ Jesus:

⁴ This appears to be the best translation of John 13. 1.

who, being in the form of God, thought it not a prize to be grasped at to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation and took upon him the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of man: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”⁵

Thus God in Christ had at last made known to the full his love for man. For Christ Jesus, the Lord and the Master, had humbled himself and had become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. He took the form of a servant, stooping down to the ground to wash away the travel-stains from our soiled feet in order to make us his own thrice-welcome guests in his Father’s house of many mansions. God’s own joy was fulfilled when sinful men and women returned his love, knowing that their sins had been forgiven.

Herein, then, is the ineffable mystery of divine love. Christ was God’s spoken word to men—God himself seeking human utterance. He “was come forth from God and went to God.” But in his coming and going God’s voice out of the dark had audibly reached mankind. Christ had revealed, in human ways, the invisible God to mortal eyes; so that John the aged could say at last: “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled . . . (for the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life which was with the Father, and was

⁵ Philippians 2. 5.

manifested unto us); that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full. This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light and in him is no darkness at all.”⁶

In crowded words like these the writer struggles to make plain the amazing fact that his own eyes had actually seen and his ears had actually heard the Word of Life. In Christ, the heart of the Eternal has at last forced its way by love’s irresistible might through the barrier of sense, and mortal eyes have known at last that God is Love. God had been seeking to tell mankind the good news all along. Fragments of the tidings had already reached us. But the news had seemed almost “too good to be true.” Now the whole word had been spoken, the whole vision had been seen, and it was far better than men had ever dared to hope. “The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory . . .), full of grace and truth.”

“Sire,” said the white-haired thane to King Edwin of Northumbria, when Paulinus came to tell the good news about Christ, “this brief human existence of ours is like a sparrow on some dark night in winter which flashes into the hall here where the fire is burning on the hearth and there is light and warmth. In its passage through the hall it stays for a few mo-

⁶ 1 John 1. 1-5.

ments in the light and then it flies out into the darkness of the night once more. If these Christian strangers from the south can tell us anything about the darkness out of which we came before our birth and into which we shall return when we leave this world at death, let us hear them gladly. For no true voice has come to us as yet which we can trust."

Paulinus could tell them of the living voice of Jesus, who could say, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." For in him God had spoken truly with a voice that man himself could understand.

With some diffidence, as a help to those like myself who wish always to see things in pictures, I would venture to use an analogy from the world of sound. For a long period no instrument had been fine enough to catch the human voice perfectly as it wandered round the earth on waves of ether. Then a delicate apparatus was so attuned as to catch a certain wavelength, and the voice "came through." I was in New York, awake before daylight on a certain morning, when for the first time the king's voice from London "came through," clear and strong. Greater wonders followed, and soon afterward men in New York were listening to Admiral Byrd as he told about the antarctic from a wireless station in Dunedin, New Zealand, thirteen thousand miles away. His voice also had "come through." Last of all, on Christmas Day, 1932, in a million homes there was heard distinctly, from every quarter of the globe, a cheery Christmas greeting as a welcoming answer to the king's broadcast message. Mankind in every land was "listening in."

How slowly, slowly, first of all, was this new wonder of sound achieved out of the darkness of the soundless past! The waves of ether were quivering all the while, but there was no instrument yet discovered delicate enough to catch the different notes. There was no means of "listening in."

Can we not feel, in Saint John's opening words of his Epistle, something of his first glorious surprise when the divine message at last "came through" from the dark world beyond? "That . . . which we have heard . . . declare we unto you, . . . that your joy may be full."

How glorious was its divine assurance! It said distinctly that God is light and in him is no darkness at all. It told us of God's joy which we might share, if we would only come to him and accept his free forgiveness of our sins "without money and without price."

Before Christ came no human vehicle had ever been so finely attuned as to catch that divine message fully and completely. Prophets and seers had heard its dim music vibrating in the air; they had indeed tried hard to "listen in" and had recorded the first faint murmurings of its notes. Then at last Christ's ear had caught it, not in a quivering fragment of sound only, but in a full clear harmony of music, so clear, so distinct that we who live centuries after can hear it still, in our turn, as we have communion and fellowship with him.

Attuned to his Spirit, we can now "listen in" to the great music of eternity, as it breaks through every

obstacle of space and rolls round the world, on and on to the farthest stars.

“God is light,” “God is love”—such is the good news it brings. To quote the opening words of the Epistle to the Hebrews, which give the same thought in a different way: “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken to us by his Son.”

Those other vehicles whereby the Divine Voice has broken through have their own unique value, for they have corroborated in every age the one great Word of God. But in Jesus Christ the response has been so complete that God’s own character of love has become fully revealed in human ways.

I can never forget one night at Cambridge when the glorious truth of all this flashed upon me during a reading of Browning’s dramatic lyric, “Saul.” One of my old schoolfellows, J. H. Srawley,⁷ gave the recitation in his own room in Caius College. He was a fine reader of poetry and he entered into the spirit of the poem.

He made us feel the darkness of King Saul’s clouded mind and the eagerness of the young minstrel David to help the king to break through the barrier of gloom and despair. We could realize, as he read on, that it was not Saul merely, but all mankind that was groping in the dark, seeking for the light. Then David the minstrel rises higher and higher until he reaches the highest note of all in his song. The truth

⁷ Now Canon and Chancellor of Lincoln Cathedral.

suddenly flashes upon him and his whole being is aflame. He has seen the light at last. It is this: If he, David, would joyfully pour out his own life to raise Saul from his fallen state, then God would not do less.

Nay, rather, God will do more, not less. He will stoop to the uttermost in love and service. He will go to the last limit of sacrifice to win man's love back in return.

While the long poem was being recited we sat round the hearth watching the flames, with just the added glimmer of a shaded light for the speaker to read by. The very room with its glowing warmth seemed to bring us to the threshold of that burning mystery of love which is in the heart of God, ardent, aflame. It was like that firelight—so I pictured it—round which we were then seated together, all aglow, all aflame, ever giving out its own warmth as it burns away. For it is God's own love for us that creates the longing in our own hearts to love him in return. We love because he first loved us.

Such fathomless thoughts as these seem at first sight to have carried us very far away from that inner chamber where Jesus, the Lord and the Master, laid aside his garments and stooped down in lowly guise, girded with a towel, to wash his own disciples' feet. But the writer of this Gospel is ever leading us forward along this very avenue, as we gaze out beyond the external event to find the inner reality. For he sees clearly how this act of God's humility has its own eternal background.

The self-spending love which Jesus showed in this manner in a living deed is God's own nature, God's character, God's inmost being. He who stooped in lowliness came to us from the bosom of the Father. He returns. He ever comes and goes. Therefore we too can come and go along this new and living Way into the holiest of all, which he, our Lord and Master, has opened for us through the veil, for he who takes us by the hand and leads us forward step by step is himself the Way, the Truth and the Life.

CHAPTER III

THE NEW COMMANDMENT

“A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.”

WHEN I had come into closest personal touch in India with those who were earnest seekers after spiritual truth, and we were able to speak to one another quite freely about religion, a question was put to me by an intimate friend.

“What,” he asked me, “does Christ’s presence mean for you each day? How does it make your whole life so intimately one?”

It would have been possible to give many answers to such a wide question as this; and at first I thought of explaining to him how in Christ the inner and outer life, the body and the soul, become an integral moral unity, and thus an inward peace is established. Christ himself, I would have shown him, is the living Sacrament of this union. “The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory).”

But another reply came to my mind which I felt he could understand better than the one I was about to give him. It was more directly practical, while at the same time it embodied the one truth which I wished to convey.

“In Christ,” I said to him, speaking out of my own

inner experience, "love to God and love to my fellow men become inseparably one. Thus the spiritual life, in all its many activities, finds its true goal. It becomes a unity where Christ is the one center, for in him the human and the divine meet together in such a living way that I am able to follow the path simply and truly, with all my heart and soul, and thus find peace."

My friend was deeply impressed at the time by this simple answer, which had come to me on the spur of the moment. It touched a chord in his own heart. "You know well," he said to me, "how we in the East, who have the divine thirst for spiritual truth implanted in us, often spend our whole lives in a continual search for that unity and peace which you describe. You must have noticed how the great words of Jesus, 'I and my Father are one,' appeal to us. When we hear them from his own sincere lips, we know that he who spoke them had attained the truth. To find the One in the Many is the eternal quest of the East. That saying of Jesus, 'I and my Father are one,' always impresses us, and we are irresistibly drawn toward him."

His own answer led me on to speak of the ultimate conception of God which Saint John had reached in his old age and had recorded in his first Epistle. God is the one perfect Love, from whence all the scattered lights of broken human love proceed.

I quoted from memory the opening words of Saint John's Epistle, "This is the message which we have

heard and announce unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.' " From this I went on to explain how this light was another name for love—he that loveth his brother abideth in the light.

Then I gave him those great words which had become deeply impressed on my mind: " 'Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. . . . Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. No man hath beheld God at any time; if we love one another, God abideth in us, and his love is perfected in us. Hereby know we that we abide in him and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit. And we have beheld and bear witness that the Father hath sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. . . . God is love; and he that abideth in love abideth in God, and God abideth in him. . . . There is no fear in love: but perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath punishment; and he that feareth is not made perfect in love. We love, because he first loved us. . . . And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God love his brother also.' "¹

These familiar sentences, which I repeated from memory, were not unknown to him, for he had studied for a long time past Saint John's writings. But he asked me very earnestly to repeat them again and then said to me with deep conviction: "Such words as these go right home to the heart. They

¹ 1 John 4. 7-21.

are true religion. The secret of all spiritual truth lies hidden in simple sentences like these. They go beyond reason and logic and speak to the inner life itself in each one of us."

It was a late evening in the hot weather when we were thus conversing together. We were seated out of doors, under the open sky, in the stillness of the night beneath the stars. It was easy amid such surroundings to feel the beauty of Saint John's words. They brought back our thoughts to the saying of Christ himself, "I and my Father are one."

Since I have lived in the East this supreme revelation of love in the heart of God, as Christ made it manifest in the midst of a decaying world, has become more and more to me the crown of the Gospel. It is not only *a* truth about God, but *the* truth about God, without which life would not be worth living. That love is the good news which Christ has brought to mankind. It is the eternal source of all human love, and it must in the end win man's own love back to itself in return.

This conception, God is love, is no easy gospel to hold fast unto death, in the face of a hard world of sin and evil which seems at times to be plunging downward headlong into ruin, as violence gains the upper hand and pure goodness appears to be defeated at every turn. It involves incredible suffering, for love can only win its way by suffering; love has no other weapon. The crude brutalities of human existence appear to brush love aside. Yet there is a spiritual unity here between God and man which goes

direct to the human heart and brings peace along with it—an inner unity realized in living deed through Christ and his cross. For God in Christ shares man's suffering to the full. He does not stand outside it. That night I felt that the East would never shrink back from taking its full portion in suffering, along with Christ, for the redemption of the world; and there is no price too great to pay for such an inner peace as comes to man's heart when the victory over sin is assured.

Two of the most heroic pioneers who went out as missionaries to unknown Central Africa last century were David Livingstone and François Coillard. They suffered incredible hardships and lived through year after year of heart-breaking disappointments which might have hardened the character and made the ideal of love less simple for them to hold fast unto death. But we find just the reverse. As they draw near to the end of their long struggle, the hearts of both of them turn more and more to Saint John's Gospel and his central thought of God's love.

"What is the atonement of Christ?" writes Livingstone in his later journal. "It is *himself*. It is the inherent and everlasting mercy of God made apparent to human eyes and ears. The Everlasting Love was disclosed in our Lord's life and death. It showed that God forgives because he loves to forgive. He works by smiles if possible: if not, by frowns; pain is only a means of enforcing love."²

François Coillard, of the Zambesi, at the very close

² R. J. Campbell, *Life of Livingstone*, p. 351.

of his work, when bitter disappointment had clouded all his life, wrote as follows: "It seems to me that it is only now that I have some slight glimpses of what love is—true love, the love of God, which loves unselfishly, without calculation, without response: which loves in spite of hostility, ingratitude, or even hatred. *God is Love.* O my God, live in me, that I may live with thy life and love with thy love."³

Just as the two hands of the musician play in harmony together on the organ some perfect fugue, the one hand leading the other, so here, in Christ's gospel, revealed by himself in his own life, love to man and love to God are intermingled and entwined. Even the simplicity of the words carries the music along. We can feel how Saint John, at Ephesus, as he "tarried till the Lord came," had gradually laid aside all other conception of the divine life as incomplete and had found his entire contentment at last in these few elementary truths. "My little children," he says, with pathetic emphasis and repetition, "let us not love in word, neither with the tongue, but in deed and truth. Hereby shall we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him, whereinsoever our heart condemn us; because God is greater than our heart and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, we have boldness toward God; and whatsoever we ask, we receive of him. . . . And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us."⁴

³ *Coillard of the Zambezi*, p. 443.

⁴ 1 John 3. 18-24.

When we read over such passages as these, we feel that it gave the writer a pure joy to utter again and again the same words, like the musician who has found some wholly satisfying chord and cannot help repeating it in different ways. They are also a pure joy to us when we read them, many centuries after they were written. They have an abiding value in the New Testament which the lapse of time only deepens.

One of the traditional stories about Saint John, in his old age, relates how at last he had grown so advanced in years that his sight failed him and his memory had become dim. He had to be carried from place to place on a couch by his young disciples, who loved him with intense devotion. On one occasion he was brought thus into the midst of the Christian congregation at Ephesus, where he had long been revered as the last living witness who had "seen the Lord." As he held up his feeble hands in blessing he repeated over and over again the simple words, "Little children, love one another. Little children, love one another." So he continued to utter them, whenever he was in their company, until at last he passed away into the presence of the eternal Love itself.

In all that was said in the last chapter about Christ's lowly deed in washing the disciples' feet I find the same harmony brought out between the divine Love and the human love. Just as Love incarnate stoops down to the very dust in order to pay the deepest reverence to man, even so must the human love of the disciples, which is the counterpart of Love divine,

express itself in the lowliest acts of tender service, if it would be true to Christ himself. It must be ready joyfully to take the lowest place in order to minister in his name to the least of his brethren.

"Know ye," said Christ to his disciples, "what I have done unto you? Ye call me the Master and the Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, the Lord and the Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, A servant is not greater than his Lord, neither one that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, blessed are ye if ye do them."

It was in this same hour of intimate communion that Jesus gathered his own chosen disciples around him for the last time and gave them his "new commandment" of love. For on that night of the betrayal, after Judas had gone out, he said to them: "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."

This "new commandment" of love is repeated again and again as one of the central refrains which run through the parting words of Jesus in the upper room. It is linked closely, on the one hand, with the divine promise of the gift of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, who shall abide with them forever. On the other hand it is united with the divine pledge concerning prevailing, energizing prayer, "Ask what

ye will, and it shall be done unto you." These three great themes, the new commandment, the gift of the Holy Spirit and the prevailing power of prayer, are intimately connected. Here it is necessary to confine our thoughts to what is implied by the "new commandment" in its close connection with the washing of the disciples' feet.

Saint John, in his Gospel, omits the direct words of the institution of the Eucharist itself, but all the while, in his own mystical way, his mind is brooding over the thought of the guest chamber and the Last Supper. There is the cleansing which is the preparation for the Holy Communion. Then there follows the full sacramental background in the parable of the true vine. Afterward we have the promise of the Holy Spirit and the gift of peace; and we remember how the Invocation of the Spirit and the Kiss of Peace were integral parts of the Eucharist in the early church. Last and greatest of all, we feel ourselves present at the Divine Liturgy itself in the Prayer of Consecration which comes at the close, "For their sakes I consecrate myself, that they also may be consecrated in truth." Here, the Eucharistic notes of thanksgiving, consecration, and communion are blended into one and reach their highest fulfillment.

While all this is profoundly true, at the same time it is equally clear that Christ's word, "Do this," with regard to the washing of the feet and the new commandment, is no less incumbent on us than the "Do this" of the Eucharist itself. For these acts are also

a sacrament. In every fulfillment of the commands of humility and love, we "do show forth the Lord's death until he come." We keep Christ in remembrance. His humility is to be our humility. The love of Christ is to be our own love. The great words of the Gospel, "So God loved the world," must be illustrated by our example and set forth in our lives. For, however difficult it may be even to think of living up to such a perfect standard, this is really what the "new commandment" means.

But there is a further thought which Canon R. L. Ottley gave to us at that retreat in Southwark Cathedral to which I have already referred,⁵ and it has clung to my mind ever since. He told us that in the "feet-washing" and in the "new commandment" taken together we had an injunction laid upon us to cleanse away, by perfect Christian humility and grace, the evil which our brother might be committing, often perhaps quite unawares. Just as we were to welcome any act of cleansing for ourselves, when we were humbly told by our fellow Christians what was wrong in us, so we had the same duty to fulfill, with all humility, to those who were one with us in Christ. For in this way Christ had commanded us "to wash one another's feet." His own act signified a cleansing from sin. Our lowliness of heart and tender love toward others ought to carry with it the same effect of silent cleansing. If we were pure enough, we might help others to see for themselves what was inwardly wrong. Without either judging them or

⁵ P. 45.

becoming censorious it was possible in this very way to radiate goodness which had a cleansing power. No task could be more Christlike than this, and none was more delicate and difficult in its fulfillment.

There is a story, which I have often told, illustrating in a way that cannot be forgotten Canon Ottley's words. An old American Negro named Uncle Sam, on Saint Helena's Island, South Carolina, who had been born in slavery, was a very dear friend of mine while I lived there. He had a wonderful gift of putting things tersely in a single phrase that clung to my mind. Once, when a mischievous young Negro lad had got into trouble, he said to those who were trying their best to correct him, "You have just got to love him out of it." There could hardly be a more literal translation than that of Christ's own words, "Ye ought also to wash one another's feet." For with regard to those who are one with us in Christ he has told us to love them out of their faults, as he has loved us out of our own faults.

Pure love is a cleansing fire. There is no weakness in it. The dross in us is burned up by it. But it does something much more at the same time. It creates in us a new energy of goodness. The "expulsive power of a new affection," as it has been nobly called, is always needed in order perfectly to fulfill this double process. The empty chamber of the heart is not only made spotlessly clean by love as it consumes the evil; it is also indwelt by the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of new life.

This point, which I have been trying hard to make

clear, belongs to the inner genius of the Christian faith. It carries with it that extravagance of generous impulse which Christ so warmly approves and accepts whenever it is entirely simple and true and not vacillating with spurious sentiment. We trace this strong commendation of Christ in his words spoken about the act of the woman who came with the alabaster box of precious ointment and poured it over his feet. We find this same principle carried to its furthest point by Jesus himself in the Sermon on the Mount, where he tells us, in words which must seem mere folly in the eyes of the world, to love our enemies, to bless them that curse us, to do good to them that hate us, and to pray for them that despitefully use us and persecute us. "If," says Jesus, "ye salute your brethren only, what do ye to excess? . . . Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."

Christ's own Passion itself was the most lavish act of all. It "placarded"⁶ God's love to mankind before the eyes of the whole world. It seemed "foolishness," but that is what generous love always appears to be.

God himself, our Father, exceeds all bounds in his generous affection. That is the Christian meaning of the beautiful word "grace." In the parable of the prodigal son the Father runs to meet his child. He puts the ring on his finger and clothes him with the best robe. We too must have this generous nature

⁶ Galatians 3. 1. This is the literal meaning of the Greek word translated "set forth."

if we would follow in Christ's footsteps. We must be ready to go to any lengths in humble, loving service.

During the time when I was writing this chapter an incident occurred which illustrated in a living way for me this exceeding love of God which passes all human measure. A child of two years was at play on a sand heap one afternoon. While the mother's attention was turned away for a few minutes by other needs, the little one toddled out of the garden and was completely lost. The anguish of the mother when she realized what had happened can hardly be imagined. She called quickly on others to help her in the search and with a true mother's instinct took the right direction. At last she found him some distance down the road. She took him up in her arms with a joy which came out of the depths of suffering such as none but her own heart could know. Those around her rejoiced with her over the little one who had been lost. Even so, we are told in Christ's parable, which rushed to my mind at once, there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth.

That anguish of true love, far deeper than any mother's love for her dearest child, is revealed to us from the depth of the heart of God as we see him made manifest to human eyes in the face of Jesus Christ. The "extravagance" of that love of God is the deepest mystery of all. Its length and depth and breadth and height pass all our human knowledge. We can never fathom its goodness or its utter sacrifice.

When, in the first passionate love for Christ after my conversion, I was striving with deep earnestness to live the Christian life to the full, this one sentence from the Sermon on the Mount—"What do ye to excess?"—arrested me. It remained before me as a text on my study table all through my college days at Cambridge. It gave me a standard whereby loyalty to Christ might be judged.

The words carry with them something which is surely of the essence of the Gospel, and the East, wherein I have spent the greater part of my life, knows well the meaning of that "excess." The pure devotion of Kagawa and Sadhu Sundar Singh has brought back into the Christian Church the lost radiance of the Christian religion for which Dr. L. P. Jacks, one of the noblest of our modern writers, so intensely longed. It is no calculating love that will ever win the heart of the East.

With very great diffidence indeed, owing to its personal character, I would venture to relate, as an illustration of the main thought of this chapter, the following story from the East. It sprang directly from the remembrance of our Lord, who stooped down to wash the disciples' feet, and therefore I feel it may be told.

Among the crudely brutal acts which are always likely to occur under martial law, a grievous injustice had been done in India some years ago. A young Sikh village headman, with a fine record of service as a soldier, both on the northwest frontier of India and also in France, had been hurriedly taken out

at break of day and flogged in the presence of his fellow villagers on the suspicion of having cut the telegraph wires some two miles away from his village.

Positive proof was offered me that this extremely hasty punishment, meted out instantly under martial law, was quite unjustified, and that he had been innocent of any offense. It was quite impossible at the time, in the stress of circumstance, to get justice immediately done, and I could see that it was the *moral* wound which had cut deepest of all, far deeper than any subsequent act of reparation could assuage. Already he had shown clear signs of insanity, through brooding over his intolerable wrong till it had clouded all his mind. His friends had begun to be afraid even to go near him lest some mad act of violence might happen. All day and night he stayed in one room overlooking the gateway to the town, and refused to leave it. His friends had come to me asking my help in their distress.

On drawing near to him my whole heart went out in pity for him. But he shunned me at first, even while I spoke to him the tenderest words of sympathy and love. Then suddenly, prompted from within by a subconscious memory of Christ's act, I stooped down and touched his feet, asking from him at the same time pardon for the great wrong my fellow countrymen had committed.

When he saw what I had done he drew his feet very quickly away, almost with a shock; then he burst into tears. For a long time we remained together,

while he cried his heart out with convulsive sobs which seemed as though they would never cease. When at last, with deep emotion, I asked him if the past had all been forgotten and forgiven, he answered "Yes," and his face was lighted up with a new joy and peace. His spirit had found its release and his heart had become again as the heart of a little child.

This illustration, which I have tried to tell quite simply as it all happened, may serve to make plain in human ways some of the first steps in the marvelous working of the divine love, for it was truly the constraining love of Christ that carried me forward. His too was the divine power to heal and to bless. A thousand, thousand times Christ's own love had forgiven me, a sinner; he had thus made me to understand what forgiveness meant to the spirit of a fellow man.

In the communion of Christ's Spirit with our own hearts there comes to us an infinite strength. The sick world is waiting to-day for his healing touch. He himself longs, with unspeakable longing, to use our hands and feet for blessing and healing. He seeks to speak through our lips the word of life. Can we be silent enough in our inner lives to listen to his voice when he calls us? Can we be still enough in our own hearts for him to speak through us when he bids us to speak? Only thus can we be, in deed and in truth, channels of his divine grace. Therefore he must stoop down and wash our feet in utter self-abasement, so that we in turn may fulfill his new commandment and love one another as he has loved us.

CHAPTER IV

LET NOT YOUR HEART BE TROUBLED

"Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me."



THE farewell chapters of Saint John's Gospel give us in verses, which can never grow old or outworn, the Saviour's parting message to his chosen disciples before he suffered death upon the cross. His words, thus recorded, have brought more inner peace and spiritual comfort to struggling men and women in every age than any other part of the New Testament. Along with the Sermon on the Mount and Saint John's first Epistle, they stand out as the favorite portions of Holy Scripture which are read over and over again in Christian homes, and their thoughts have everywhere brought peace and good will among the races of mankind, for they tell us how wonderfully God loved the world.

During times of bodily illness and suffering, and also in dark periods of spiritual affliction, these simple words of Christ our Saviour carry blessing and healing with them. There is a unique power abiding in them to calm the troubled spirit. They are able to bring to man's inmost heart the presence of Jesus himself. For they reveal to us, in words which we

know by heart, gleams of the divine beauty of that eternal realm—the Father's house of many mansions—where there shall be “no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.”¹

The opening verse, “Let not your heart be troubled,” strikes at once the keynote of all that follows. Jesus, our Lord and Master, is the great Giver of peace. He longs to bring rest to our souls. In another passage, recorded in the earlier Gospels, which is singularly akin to this in spirit, Jesus invites the simple-hearted, who long to know the Father through the Son, to come to himself for rest.

“Come unto me,” he pleads, “all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”²

There is one more story from the early ministry of Jesus by the Sea of Galilee which portrays to us the same majestic vision of our Lord as the giver of peace to mankind. The troubled disciples in their ship on the stormy waters are filled with alarm at the raging of the sea and the roaring of the sudden tempest. But Jesus is present in their midst. He rebukes the waves and winds, saying, “Peace, be still,” and there is a great calm. So in his farewell communion with his disciples in the upper room, as the darkness increases and the storm of hate outside grows more intense,

¹ Revelation 21. 4.

² Matthew 11. 28-30.

Jesus gives to his loved ones his own gift of peace, and their anxious hearts are set at rest. "Let not your heart be troubled," he says to them with tender human sympathy, "ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."

Thus Jesus seeks to bestow on us, as his own parting gift, that inward peace which the world can never take away. He will not leave us desolate. He will come to us. Because he lives, we shall live also. As we read over sentences like these our minds are stilled. Christ breathes upon us the breath of his own quiet spirit. The vague fears that formerly obsessed us vanish, and we gain his calmness within. For we know that there is no depth of human suffering or sorrow that has not been fathomed by him, nor is there any darkness of the soul that he has not endured to the bitter end.

In India I have witnessed, far beyond the boundaries of the Christian faith, how those who have been nurtured in other religions have found their own kinship here with Saint John. The language he uses is universal, and the thoughts expressed by him are universal also. No other words in the whole of the New Testament have had such power to move the heart of the East as these.

One who never outwardly became a Christian, P. C. Mozoomdar, found in them the greatest joy of his

whole life. In his book, *The Oriental Christ*, he constantly refers to them. The deep mystical note in them appealed to him as an intimation of that divine beauty which is behind the veil of sense. "From the other shore of eternity," he writes, "faith catches dimly now and then the echo of the immortal harmonies. But when Christ says to the soul, 'Let not your heart be troubled . . . I go to prepare a place for you,' then the dimness breaks out into glory."

"The dimness breaks out into glory." At one of the deepest moments of my own life in the East, when I was in quiet retreat with Indian students, we instinctively turned to these words, "Let not your heart be troubled," for the subject of our meditations. I do not think that any one of us forgot in after years the nearness of Christ to us during those wonderful days of vision. "The dimness broke out into glory."

To Sadhu Sundar Singh Saint John's Gospel was the heart of the New Testament. "For me," he said, "Saint John's Gospel is the greatest of all." These farewell chapters, with their opening words, "Let not your heart be troubled," were to him nothing less than the inner sanctuary of the spiritual life. He used always to return to them. "Saint John," he writes, "who lay on the Master's breast at the Last Supper, did not converse simply in words, but, rather, heart to heart with Jesus. The other disciples asked questions and were satisfied when they received an answer, but John desired something that united heart with heart. That is why he had a greater power of

expressing the inward and personal relationship of our hearts with Jesus Christ."

He found, as so many have done in India, that the Gospel spoke to him in his own religious language, making him in the highest sense a Christian *Bhakta*, a devotee of Christ. His heart thirsted for the living Christ, and in Saint John's Gospel he was able to realize his presence. "Let not your heart be troubled" and "In my Father's house are many mansions" were two of his favorite texts.

In one of our Indian college libraries I took down from the shelf an English copy of the New Testament in large type, and out of interest and curiosity turned over its pages to find out which were most marked. As I expected, the Gospel and Epistles of Saint John were more marked than any other portion except the Sermon on the Mount. I know only of one New Testament commentary by a Hindu religious author. That commentary is on Saint John, written by a Hindu monk of the Ramkrishna Mission. When I stayed with these monks, they told me that Saint John's Gospel appealed to them more than any other Christian Scripture.

Those whose daily ministry has been among the sick and dying, whether in the East or in the West, know full well how these words of Jesus have been able to bring illumination where all other avenues of approach to the sorrowing heart of man have been closed. In the presence of death and bereavement they give the greatest comfort of all. For they tell us that One who knows all our fears and sorrows

has gone before to prepare a place for us, that where he is there we may be also.

I have a vivid memory still how once in India, when I was in the midst of the valley of the shadow of death, his support never failed me and his staff comforted me all the way. Never for a moment did the benediction of his peace cease to sustain and strengthen me.

From that memory I would turn back to my early childhood and recall how dear to my own mother these chapters of Saint John's Gospel had become through constant loving use. In the midst of incessant duties which came to her day and night owing to our large family, with poverty nearly always at the door, she taught us to love them as a cherished possession. She herself reached old age at last in the serene atmosphere of inward peace and handed down to us, who loved her far more than words could tell, an example of what it meant to live all day long in the conscious presence of her Lord.

To carry on this same recollection of my childhood a little further, one of the very earliest remembrances I have of the melody of these chapters was to hear them read aloud by Mr. Heath, the minister in charge of the congregation at the Catholic Apostolic Church in Birmingham where my mother took me regularly for worship. On the Thursday of Holy Week each year, just before Good Friday, they were read through from beginning to end at a special service. I can vividly recall the beauty of the words, which appealed to me even before I could follow their meaning.

While at other times I was restless in church and my mother had great trouble in keeping me quiet, yet at this one service the music of the verses, as the minister read them with his perfectly modulated voice, together with the mystery of their sound, used to fascinate me; and I would listen right on to the end without any weariness at all.

We who use the old English version of the Bible must be deeply grateful to the translators under James I, who have maintained throughout in Saint John's Gospel such noble rhythm in the words which they have used. The monosyllables with their soft vowels, and the simplicity of each phrase, seem to give an unbroken cadence without a single harshness. Perhaps the most deeply moving strain of all is reached toward the end of the fourteenth chapter in the words: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."³

It would not be a difficult task to glean from the field of world literature, as Prothero has done for the Psalms, passages illustrating, from each generation in turn, the abiding comfort which Saint John's Gospel has afforded to troubled human hearts.

A deeply touching narrative is given by J. G. Lockhart of Sir Walter Scott's last illness at Abbotsford, which will not bear abbreviation and may be quoted in full as follows: "He then desired to be wheeled through his rooms, and we moved him leisurely for an hour or more up and down the hall and the great

³ John 14. 27.

library: 'I have seen much,' he kept saying, 'but nothing like my ain house—give me one turn more!' He was gentle as an infant, and allowed himself to be put to bed again the moment we told him that we thought he had had enough for one day.

"Next morning he was still better: after again enjoying the Bath chair for perhaps a couple of hours out of doors, he desired to be drawn into the library, and placed by the central window, that he might look down upon the Tweed. Here he expressed a wish that I should read to him, and when I asked from what book, he said: 'Need you ask? There is but one.'

"I chose the fourteenth chapter of Saint John's Gospel; he listened with mild devotion, and said when I had done, 'Well, this is a great comfort; I have followed you distinctly, and I feel as if I were yet to be myself again.' In this placid frame he was again put to bed, and had many hours of soft slumber."⁴

These farewell chapters, with their opening words "Let not your heart be troubled," have equally inspired those whose years have been spent for the good of humanity in doing golden deeds. Florence Nightingale, whose philanthropic work was incessant throughout a long life of ceaseless new enterprise on behalf of the sick and needy, writes:

"For myself, the mystical and spiritual religion of Saint John's Gospel, however imperfectly I have lived up to it, was and is enough."

⁴ J. G. Lockhart, *Life of Sir Walter Scott*, Vol. VII, p. 387.

The most beautiful story of all is contained in the letter of one of the young disciples of the Venerable Bede written just after his death. In spite of the troubled times, Bede had lived on at Jarrow, in Northumberland, to a good old age, with his young, eager pupils round him. His face reflected the inner beauty of his own serene vision of Christ his Lord, and he was loved by everyone who came in contact with him.

He had diligently taught his young disciples the Gospels, which he was translating with their help into English. At last he was broken down with illness, and his infirmities rapidly increased as the end of his life drew near. His nights were sleepless and full of pain. But he went on with the translation of Saint John's Gospel, which alone remained to be completed. At last he had come to the farewell chapters, where Christ speaks his parting words to his own beloved disciples. When he had reached the words, "I will not leave you orphans,"⁵ he wept much, and his young disciples wept with him. They knew at last that the death of their father in Christ, which would leave them desolate, was near at hand.

One by one, the last chapters of Saint John were being completed, and the festival of the Ascension had arrived. Bede sent the rest of the boys to sing at the festival service in the monastery church while one remained to continue the work of translation with him. "Dearest father," said the young scribe

⁵ John 14. 18. The Authorized Version translates "comfortless." See R. V. margin.

with tears, seeing Bede's increasing weakness, "there is only one chapter still to be done; but it is hard for thee to question thyself thus." "Nay, nay," said the old man, "take thy pen and write." He spent the day in giving away his little treasures of spice and incense and in bidding farewell.

Then the evening came, and the young scribe said, "Master, there is yet one more sentence." Bede answered, "Write quickly." After a while the boy said, "Now it is finished." "Well," said Bede, "thou hast spoken truly, 'It is finished.'" Then he bade his friends to place him so that he could look on the spot where he was wont to kneel in prayer. And lying thus upon the pavement of his cell he chanted the Gloria and, as he uttered the words "Holy Spirit" he breathed his last.⁶

From this earliest record I pass forward again to tell one further incident that touches my own life in Cambridge: how James Adam, the Platonist, lay dying. His wife, on each night, before he went to sleep, would read to him the fourteenth of Saint John, his favorite chapter, sometimes in the authorized English version and sometimes in the original Greek. Thus he passed away with these words of comfort and peace sustaining him to the end.⁷

The same divine strength has always been given to

⁶ Abbreviated from *Dictionary of National Biography*, Vol. II, p. 100. The account is taken from a letter of Cuthbert, written immediately after Bede's death.

⁷ See memoir of James Adam in *Religious Teachers of Greece*, p. 55. (I owe this reference to my friend, Doctor Howard.) Other references will be found in a note at the end of this volume.

men and women in all ranks and conditions of life, young and old alike, through these chapters of Saint John. They are never out of date. Perhaps it may be truly said that their universal note, setting forth our Christian faith in its simplest, yet profoundest form, was never more deeply needed than at the present time. James Adam died in 1907; and I have related elsewhere how Charles Prior, my own college tutor, during his last illness, used to ask me to read aloud to him these verses of Saint John.⁸ Even to-day, thirty years after, my thoughts at once recall his face as it shone with spiritual light in the midst of physical pain.

And I have had an exactly similar experience by the bedside of a dear friend who has suffered far beyond what most of us are called upon to bear.⁹ To him also, as I have read through these chapters, they have been like living water springing up unto eternal life. They have brought to him a peace which passes all human understanding and a joy such as the world can never take away. Out of the frequent quiet times which I have spent with him this book has been written. And while we have often prayed together in that upper room where he lies in his illness, we have been both of us conscious of the presence of our Lord in the midst of us saying, "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

⁸ See p. 41, and *What I Owe to Christ*, p. 125.

⁹ See pp. 12 and 13.

CHAPTER V

MANY MANSIONS

“In my Father’s house are many mansions . . . I go to prepare a place for you . . . I will come again.”



THE Greek word translated “mansion” has the meaning of an abode, or a dwelling-place, within one large and spacious home. In the East, where children are married at a much earlier age than in the West, and therefore different branches of the family live together in a single home, it is a common practice to have many dwelling-places forming portions of one common family house. This appears to be the outward picture which Jesus gives us in this passage, in order to represent to us in parable an inward and spiritual state.

Though we would not wish to lose the beauty of the English words “many mansions,” which have become endeared to us through intimate association, yet we need to bear in mind that the thought of the indwelling and abiding of God runs through the whole verse; for the very same Greek word which is translated “mansion” in this verse is used also in verse 23 for “abode,” where Jesus says, “If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our *abode* with

him." The thought of "abode" in this second reference is purely spiritual and it colors the former passage also. Jesus "goes away" and "comes again" in the spiritual sphere. Space and time are only the broken lights of the eternal "here" and "now."

It was a pure joy to me to find, among the American Negro folk with whom I was staying in South Carolina, that this vivid picture of the "many mansions" from Saint John's Gospel had been especially beloved by the plantation slaves in the old sad days, when by the waters of their Babylon they sang the songs of Zion in a strange land. No doubt there was a naïve concreteness in their conception of the heavenly home. For out of the midst of their long captivity they imagined the golden mansions of the new Jerusalem and the golden harps and crowns of gold. But the faith and love that accompanied their childlike dreams did much to raise their thoughts beyond the earth, so that their melodies might truly be called "Negro spirituals." After all, even the wisest man has to become like a little child in visualizing the eternal; and this beautiful picture of the Father's house which Saint John has left with us has brought a wealth of happiness and peace to millions of weary and heaven-laden human hearts in every corner of the earth.

Jesus was now leaving one of those many mansions in his Father's home when he spoke these words in the upper room. For that guest chamber itself had been for a while an inner sanctuary, a true dwelling-place of God. There, in the silence of the heart,

Jesus had become one with his beloved disciples and they had become one with him. Now he was going away, out of their sight. But inwardly he would make his abode with them more closely than ever before; and where he was present, there was his Heavenly Father also. For the great words, "I and my Father are one," now remained true for all time, and men and women would be able in ever new ways to realize their profound spiritual meaning.

So the dwelling-place of God, his Father, would still be with men, even on this troubled earth. The eternal life had already begun for those disciples within that upper room, in that supreme moment when they had suddenly understood, with deepest humility and awe, how Jesus had loved them unto death and had sought for their own love in return. Thus they had learned to know at last the only true God, whose name was Love, and Jesus Christ whom he had sent. That *was* eternal life.

We are confronted here with a thought which is difficult to express in words and yet very simple. For we have all known moments in our lives—some in the recollections of early childhood; others in a great experience of manhood or womanhood—that were literally timeless. "Time stood still," the poet tells us. That is as near as language can express it. The highest human love, when it first comes flooding into the soul, is of that order. So is the sudden flash of amazement at the beauty of nature. These reveal to us the eternal that lies ever behind the temporal.

In the wonderful days of my own life, after my

conversion,¹ I was dwelling for a time in another world. This was not a mere figure of speech, but a daily reality. Old things had passed away, and behold, all things had become new. Even the very light of the sun was different, and human faces became much more lovable. Nature herself took on a brighter hue. It is true that the new radiance faded. But in deepest moments, ever afterward, unmistakable glimpses have returned. The memory has never died away; rather, it has become a part of my own very being. So I have known, by a personal experience, what Saint John was trying to tell us in these verses, where Jesus says, "I go away—I come again—that where I am there ye may be also."

What we finally reach in its simplest form is this—that the soul within us has its own heaven. There Jesus is, and there at any moment we also can be with him; not after death in some unknown place beyond the skies, but here and now.

The story is told by Hugh Macmillan, in *The Daisies of Nazareth*, of a Highland shepherd on a lonely moor who had been infirm for many years and blind. He was so crippled with rheumatism that he could not stir from his seat beside his lowly peat fire. As he was sitting thus one day, a kindly visitor asked him whether the hours which he spent in this manner were not weary, and spoke of the blessedness of heaven. The old shepherd answered simply, "I know it well: I have been in heaven during the last ten years." He went on to explain to his visitor that

¹ See *What I Owe to Christ*, p. 70.

since Jesus had entered his heart ten years ago, and had made his abode there, he had not felt the weariness as he had done before. The presence of Jesus had been so near that he had known what heaven was even in this mortal life. For where the Lord Jesus was present, heaven was present also.

Rarely, perhaps, is there such an unbroken spirit of peace as this represents, but we have many examples of religious experience in every age and country where the presence of God, as the one reality, has overshadowed everything else and changed the whole face of human existence. We have accounts on the one hand of those who have kept the inner vision marvelously bright amid tireless, joyful activity. We have other records of those who found Christ's presence in patient waiting where activity was denied. We know that it is only the pure in heart who thus see God; and we know also that such a vision brings with it a humility that grows deeper and deeper every day.

"Still to the lowly soul
He doth himself impart,
And for his dwelling and his throne
Chooseth the pure in heart."

The world's greatest religious literature in every country has now been opened up to our gaze, and we find that this inner vision and these supreme moments of exaltation are not confined within the boundaries of Christendom. It is impossible, for instance, to read the vital spiritual experiences told by men

and women in India, especially the religious folk songs of the peasant mystics, without coming to that conclusion. There is also in clear evidence a practical life of pure devotion and sacrifice which accompanies these religious poems; they come from the heart. Kabir's personality, to take an example, has the mark of the highest moral greatness plainly written upon it, and the same may be affirmed concerning Guru Nanak and others.

In the many mansions of the Father's house there is ample room for all such noble lives. Saint John's Gospel makes that clear. The aged saint who wrote it rejoiced to watch the true light shining everywhere among the sons of men. "The wind," says Jesus, in this Gospel, "bloweth where it listeth, and thou hear-est the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit."

The Father's house—to carry on this noble thought still further—is wide and spacious enough for all his scattered children. "They shall come," says Christ, "from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God." We in our littleness of heart and obliquity of vision have continually tried to confine God's mercy and loving-kindness within the boundaries of our own devising. We have wished to narrow down the limits of his house of many mansions. Faber, the Roman Catholic poet, has quite rightly sung to us that the Father's love for his children is far broader than the measure of man's mind and that the

heart of the Eternal is more wonderfully kind than we could ever imagine. Faber goes on to say,

"But we make his love too narrow
By false limits of our own;
And we magnify his strictness
With a zeal he will not own."

We have, therefore, he tells us, to make our own love "more simple" and "trust more bravely his vast tenderness for us." For it extends "far beyond our dreams."

Not only in Saint John, but in the earlier Gospels also, the same great universal note is struck, to whose glorious music the ear of the church has not yet been fully attuned. For there is one saying of Jesus, recorded in each of the earlier Gospels, which strikes this universal note in an unmistakable manner. When Jesus was told that his mother and his brethren stood without, seeking him, he said: "Whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and my mother."

God is no respecter of persons, nor is his presence confined to any single race or portion of the earth: but "in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him."² Thus Peter learned in the first days of the Christian Church; and he had the grace to open his heart to the larger truth. "What was I," he said humbly, "that I could withstand God?"³ So also we have to recognize the same larger truth in our own day, in those deeply religious

² Acts 10. 35.

³ Acts 11. 17.

Eastern lands where the Father has been seeking his true worshipers all down the centuries. We must never limit our thoughts as though we ourselves alone were the objects of the love of the Universal Father of mankind.

A very remarkable record has been given to us in the writings of P. C. Mozoomdar, whom I have already mentioned, which makes clear to us beyond a shadow of doubt the wideness of this all-embracing love of the Heavenly Father. It reveals to us also how truly, according to the saying in Saint John's Gospel, the "Spirit bloweth where it listeth."

"Nearly twenty years ago," he writes, "my troubles forced upon me the question of personal relationship to Christ. I was early awakened to a sense of deep inner unworthiness. Placed in youth beside a very pure and powerful character,⁴ I was helped to feel, by the law of contrast, that I was painfully imperfect and needed very much the grace of a saving God. The doctrine of original corruption never pre-occupied my boyhood: the fear of eternal punishment never biased my thought. I was never taught to feel any undue leaning toward the Christian religion.

"But as the sense of sin grew upon me, and with it a deep, miserable restlessness, I was mysteriously led to feel a personal affinity to the spirit of Christ. The whole subject of the life and death of Christ had a marvelous fascination for me. Untaught by anyone, often discouraged and ridiculed, I persisted in

⁴ This was evidently Keshub Chunder Sen, to whom he dedicated his book called *The Oriental Christ*.

according to Christ a tenderness of honor which arose in my heart unbidden. I prayed and fasted at Christmas and Easter. Secretly I hunted the bookshops of Calcutta to gather the so-called likenesses of Christ. I did not know—I cared not to think—whether all this would lead.

“My inward trials and travails had reached a crisis. It was a week-day evening. The shades had thickened into darkness as I sat near a large tank in the Hindu College compound. . . .

“Suddenly it seemed to me—let me own it was revealed to me—that close to me there was a holier, more blessed, more loving Personality upon which I might repose my troubled head. Jesus was discovered in my heart as a strange, human, kindred love.

“The response of my nature was immediate. Jesus from that day became to me a reality whereon I might lean. It was an impulse, then, a flood of light, love, and consolation. It is no longer an impulse now; it is a faith and principle; it is an experience verified by a thousand trials. It was not a bodily Christ then; it is much less a bodily emanation now. It was a character, a Spirit, a holy, sacrificed exalted self, whom I recognized as the true Son of God.

“My aspiration has been, since then, not to speculate on Christ, but to be what Jesus tells us all to be. That labor, I know, will not end in this life. But I can with perfect truth declare that it is the grace and activity of the indwelling presence of God above whereto I am indebted for these experiences.”⁵

⁵ Mozoomdar, *The Oriental Christ*, pp. 10-13 (abbreviated).

Though Pratap Chunder Mozoomdar had passed away before I could meet him in India, the memory of his saintly character remained, and those who had known him intimately would speak to me about him with deepest reverence and affection. His book, *The Oriental Christ*, from which I have abbreviated this quotation, reveals on every page that supreme devotion to the person of Jesus our Lord which was the center of his whole existence. As a pioneer attempt in the East to deal with this great theme it has broken up new and fertile ground. In my own life it has been a deeply valued treasure, helping me to understand thoughts about Christ that are dearest of all to Indian hearts.

A touching incident has been told me about him by two members of the Society of Friends who met him in India shortly before his death. His face was radiant with the love of Christ, and their whole talk was about him. Just before parting they sang together the hymn composed by the daughter of Nilakanta Goreh,⁶ "In the Secret of His Presence." Such was the inner life of one who never outwardly joined the Christian Church, but remained faithful unto death to his Lord.

Miracles of grace in the inner life, such as this story reveals, prove to us that the Spirit of the living God is everywhere at work in all ages changing the hearts of men. Far beyond the bounds of any human agency, or the direct ministry of the Christian Church, Christ's personal presence is found, and in that pres-

⁶ See p. 296.

ence is the fullness of spiritual life. There is a great volume of testimony already established in India which goes to prove this; and our hearts rejoice as we realize anew, in this manner, the vast transcendence and immeasurable fullness of the love of God, exceeding all that we could either ask or think. Therefore, with the apostle Paul, we may exclaim: "O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways, past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counselor?"

How large that volume will grow in the days to come, only those who know intimately the beautiful devotion of the Indian heart can adequately imagine. The title of a book which has recently been written by J. S. Hoyland, *The Cross Moves East*, is a clear reminder to those of us who have inherited the spiritual treasures of the Christian West that we have only learned a fraction hitherto of the immeasurable riches of Christ's love. For in him "there is neither Greek nor Jew, . . . Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all."

When I was living with Sadhu Sundar Singh, the indelible impression was left upon me that he carried about with him, in every circumstance of life, a calm peace and a joyous spirit that was supernatural in its origin. It was the reflection, as in a mirror, of Christ his Lord. Wherever he went it was the same thing. His serene quietness never left him, and its radiant influence, like an atmosphere around him,

helped others to be calm also. In India I have met those who felt this peaceful influence whenever they met him, and in America and Europe the same witness has been given to me by very different people who stayed with him and heard him speak.

He told me how, at the time of his conversion, a great peace had entered into his soul and made its abode there so permanently that surface troubles, however painful, never seemed afterward to disturb its inward calm. He had always a wonderful power of picturing these mysterious things of the soul in parables. About this inward peace he used to say that the surface of a lake might be lashed by the storm and tempest while deep down below all was calm. So with Christ's stillness in his heart, he could remain calm within even while the worst storms in the outer world passed overhead. Christ's presence stayed the tempest and his voice said, "Peace, be still."

It was easy to see the reality of this peace which came from Christ in the Sadhu's face as he lived his daily life among us. It had become a part of his own personality. I have seen him coming out of the silence of long solitude in prayer, when he had been alone with his Lord day and night for some days together. At once when he appeared the influence he conveyed was felt by us all, and we were ourselves made calm in our own hearts by his very presence.

He had been called to this work of an apostle in India, like Saint Paul of old, directly by God himself. His conversion was "not of men, nor by men, but

by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who hath raised him [Christ] from the dead."⁷

He had seen the Lord visibly before him, who said to him: "How long will you persecute me? I have come to save you." No human aid was near at that moment; but he knew, there and then, without a shadow of doubt, Jesus Christ as his Saviour.

"So I fell at his feet," he writes, "and obtained this wonderful peace, which I could not get anywhere else. This is the joy I was longing for. This was heaven itself. When I got up, the vision had all disappeared; but the peace and the joy have remained with me ever since."

His mother, to whom he was most deeply attached, was already dead. His father and all his relations did their utmost to dissuade him from following Christ. When persuasion failed, persecution was tried.

"I remember," he writes, "the night when I was driven out of my home—that first night! I had to spend it, in cold weather, under a tree. Before this, I had lived in the midst of luxury in my own home. But I remember also the wonderful joy and peace in my heart—the presence of my Saviour. In the midst of luxuries and comforts I could not find peace in my heart; but the presence of my Saviour changed all suffering into peace, and ever since then I have felt his presence."

Sadhu Sundar Singh could truly say, concerning heaven, along with that old Highland shepherd, "I know it well: I have been in heaven during the last

⁷ Galatians 1. 1.

ten years." For with him the peace of heaven came in the midst of many persecutions which now appear to have ended in a martyr's death. Once when he was in prison for Christ's sake, he wrote on the fly-leaf of his New Testament, "Christ's presence has turned my prison into heaven." The old shepherd, in his quiet loneliness, found heaven always near; and the Sadhu found Christ's presence equally near in the midst of the burning fiery furnace. One walked with him in the midst of the fire, like unto "the Son of God."⁸

There are many different ways whereby the Vision comes to the human heart. But when it does come, its effect is unmistakable. Christ ever brings rest and peace to the soul. He makes his "abode" with us, and we are conscious of his indwelling presence.

Many times over in this book I shall make reference to Sadhu Sundar Singh. For it is surely this deep quietude of the inner spirit that we are all needing, not as a distant hope in a distant future, but here and now, in the midst of all the trials and temptations of this present world.

The Sadhu, who was my own dear friend in Christ, was an almost perfect example of what such serenity implies. His life was an open book which everyone might read. So great was the silent influence of his love for Christ upon his own father that in the end he had one of the deepest joys in his whole life, when

⁸ Daniel 3. 25. Now that four years have passed away since any news has reached us from Tibet, we may surmise that he has met the death he longed to attain.

his father gave his heart to Christ and shared with him his devotion to his Saviour. Concerning his own mother, who died when he was fourteen years of age, he always spoke with a devotion mingled with awe for her saintly beauty of character. He would speak to me about her, and his face would light up in a moment when he mentioned her name.

"It was my mother," he said, "who gave me the one longing of my heart to be a Sadhu, and when I became a follower of Christ her wish remained with me still." Once he said to an inquirer, "I have been to the best theological college in the world." "Where is that?" asked the inquirer. "My mother's bosom," he replied.

Somewhere the ignorant suggestion had been made that because his mother had never become a Christian he would not be able to meet her in heaven. When he spoke of this to the Archbishop of Canterbury his eyes flashed fire and he said, "If I do not see my mother in heaven, I shall ask God to send me to hell, that I may be with her there."

Then his face resumed its calm again. The sudden storm of emotion had passed and the sunshine filled his heart again.⁹

There is a second meaning of the word "mansions" which may well be included in this chapter. Westcott points out that a secondary use of the word is that of a "resting place" in a long journey from one stage to another. Since the metaphor of journeying

⁹ See *The Sadhu*, by Streeter and Appasamy, p. 3. The Macmillan Company.

is present in the very sentences which come after, the word "mansions" may well imply the idea of stages of progress in the unseen world as well as that of abiding and indwelling; and here too the thought of Christ's presence will remain supreme, for he is the way to the Father as well as the dwelling-place of the Christian soul.

Sometimes, in the recesses of the Himalayas beyond Narkhanda, along the Hindustan-Tibet road, or farther north toward Kashmir, I have had the glorious experience, on a long and hard day's march, of looking ahead at the bend of the road, as darkness comes quickly on, and seeing a light shining in the distance from the rest house where I hoped to spend the night. All is ready and prepared for the guest, and the fatigue of the long march is soon forgotten. Rest comes to the weary and refreshing sleep. Equally glorious is the experience on the morrow, of rising at dawn, while the great mountains are still in shadow, and starting in the cool of the morning on the next day's march.

Christ, our Lord, is ever with us at each resting place on our long pilgrim journey. He washes our feet as we come like tired travelers and pilgrims of the way, seeking the Heavenly City. There are "mansions" of this outward world as well as "mansions" of the Spirit, and through all of them Christ has passed bearing our human nature at last into the holiest of all.

Dante's great epic and Cardinal Newman's "Dream of Gerontius" give us the imaginative conception of

a deep purging and cleansing process needed as we draw nearer and nearer to the burning center of God's love. Perhaps this is as far as human thought, colored by intense poetic illumination, can travel, as it seeks to penetrate the unseen; and even here we are in the realm of poetry, where individual fancy has its place, not in a realm that has been explored and made well known.

There is one thought connected with the Father's house of "many mansions" which has haunted me for many years past by its beauty. It is this: There is no monotony in the vision of the future which is here set before us by Christ. It is the very fact of variety which makes the Father's house so universal. God who rejoices in the praise of "everything that hath breath" never intended us to be uniform in our highest spiritual strivings.

Saint Paul catches a gleam of this great truth in the majestic music of his chapter on the resurrection from the dead. "There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory."

If there is variety in the starry heavens, how much more varied is the glory of the earth! Can we dream for a moment that our Heavenly Father, who clothes the lilies of the field and feeds the birds of the air, would wish his children to praise him according to a uniform plan and pattern when they seek to "worship him in spirit and in truth"?

Unity of spirit he longs to find in us, for that is

the pathway to union with himself; but dead monotony has no grace at all; and "grace" is the Christian word with God's own stamp upon it.

The book of Revelation is a difficult book to read, and there are many strands in it of diverse value. But in those chapters, whose supreme beauty has been recognized by Christian saints and seers of all ages, a glory of color and sound is manifest that goes far beyond any other book in the Bible. There are the colors of all manner of precious stones with which the foundations of the heavenly city were garnished—sardonyx and emerald, chrysoprase and amethyst, beryl and jacinth. There is the music of the new song of the redeemed, "as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps." The whole vision of those mansions of the spirit, thus described, is crowded with color and light and sound. These intermingle but never clash; they speak of glory and beauty, but never of sameness.

Surely, the lesson to be learned both from this earth itself and from the heavens beyond is this: that our hearts, as they grow in love day by day, are being trained to be able to comprehend with all the saints "what is the breadth and length and depth and height and to know the love of Christ that passeth knowledge."

And if we go on one step further to ask ourselves the question about the future, when this corruptible mansion of our body has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then, to quote

Saint Paul again, as it is rendered in Way's beautiful version,

“Ah yes, we know that if this mere tent,
Our habitation on earth, be taken down,
A solid building, reared by God, we have still,
A habitation no hands fashioned ever.

A home eternal, in the heavens . . .

It is not that we would fain be disarrayed of the
mortal body,

Nay, but, rather, overdraped with the immortal,
That mortality may be drowned in the sea of Life.

Yea, and he who for this very consummation hath
fashioned us in God—

God, who has given us his Spirit.”

“Holy is the true light and passing wonderful, lending radiance to them that endured in the heat of conflict: from Christ they inherit a home of unfading splendor, wherein they rejoice with gladness for evermore.”¹⁰

¹⁰ J. H. Oldham, *Devotional Diary*, Fourth month, Day 24.

CHAPTER VI

I WILL COME AGAIN

“And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.”

A VERY dear friend related to me one day her own deepest spiritual experience during the Great War and in the years that followed. Her son had been killed and the shock could never be forgotten. At first she had longed intensely for some outward and visible assurance that he was still able to communicate with her. But very gradually her inner consciousness of his spiritual presence had grown so strong that for some years past she had been completely satisfied and comforted. He had become nearer to her than ever before, though nothing objective had been there to prove it.

Thus she had been very gradually weaned from the outward to the inward, from the “mansion” of the senses to the “mansion” of the spirit. This had come to her at last, in all its fullness, along with an inner awakening of her own spiritual life in Christ Jesus, chiefly through the Oxford Group Movement. She is now advanced in years and for some time past has been dwelling more in the spiritual realm than in

the world of outer things. Her son has been so near to her that her joy in him has returned, deeper than ever before. She is already with him in her interior life, even while outward things go on around her.

Personally, I have never had such a unique experience as this concerning loved ones, however dear, who have passed over into the unseen, though I cannot doubt that they are with me in the daily duties, helping me even while I write this chapter. Of one thing I am always conscious, namely, that my mother's influence has been with me all through the years since she passed away. Hers is a living influence, not a mere memory of someone dead.

Yet, deeply consoling though this consciousness of my mother's influence has been, it is not the same as the inner experience of what Christ's presence is to me. For there the borderline between sense and spirit has almost broken down and I seem to be continually passing beyond the veil of sense—or is it rather that he is ever "coming" in spiritual ways beyond all telling into my own life? Words altogether fail when we begin to define such inward things as these. Yet they are so real to us that they seem to go down as deep as life itself.

I have told elsewhere the personal story, how, when I was very young indeed, I was able from time to time to see outwardly with my eyes some person whom I very vividly imagined. Once I ran indoors to my dear mother, crying out, "Oh, mother, there's a big man standing at the door!" In reality I had only imagined this, but the image of the man was so

plain before me that I was quite positive that what I told my mother was true, and when my elder sister said to me, "Oh, Charlie, you are a naughty boy to tell such stories!" I burst into tears.

My mother well understood this imaginative side of me, but my elder sister merely took the view of common sense.

The inward certainty of the spiritual presence of Christ in my own life cannot possibly be put down to imagination, for it has gone deeper into character itself and changed my whole nature. Without it I should be a different person to-day. It has also become entirely free from any appeal to the outward and visible. It is such a *moral* certainty that it has become, as it were, the bedrock on which my whole spiritual life has been built up.

Sadhu Sundar Singh was at one time very deeply troubled by the thought that his marvelously intimate experience of Christ's presence might be due to his own imagination. The doubt afflicted him as to whether the peace which he had known in Christ might not be "a hidden power in his own life" and not due to the Divine Presence at all. This doubt, in the early days of his Christian experience, tortured him so much that he determined to put the issue to the tremendous test of a fast, which should continue, like that of his Lord, for forty days and forty nights.

In the end he became so weak, under the hard conditions which he had imposed upon himself, that he was found in an unconscious state by some wood-

cutters, who placed him in a blanket and carried him to their home, where he recovered. In speaking of this experience afterward, which he did very rarely and only when pressed to do so, he stated that his doubt itself had been entirely removed by all he had gone through. It had never afflicted him since. For in his utmost weakness the peace which he had in Christ did not leave him, but, on the contrary, grew wonderfully stronger. Therefore he knew, with a certainty of inward assurance, that it was a heaven-born peace from God himself.

When we go back to the Gospel story, we perceive how at the beginning there was a crude literalness among the first disciples, as they clung to the thought of an outward appearance or "coming" of the Lord Jesus Christ. This outward hope seemed to be necessary for their own inward faith. It is not difficult for me to understand this, because once long ago I passed through the same stage at the most impressionable period of my own life.¹ But while this clinging to the outward is easily intelligible, it clearly had its own weakness. For if the first disciples were to grow in the things of the spirit, it was necessary for them to pass on to a further and higher stage. There was needed that "weaning" process whereby this weak clinging to the concrete evidence of the senses would pass on into a full realization of Christ's inner presence.

So it was with John in his old age at Ephesus. He had learned at last the true meaning of Christ's "com-

¹ See *What I Owe to Christ*, pp. 63, 64.

ing" and how such an inward "coming" to the soul brought with it an abiding presence. He still uses the language of "going" and "coming," of "before" and "after"; but all the while he is really dwelling with Christ in an eternal realm, where such words as these are metaphors and symbols only, not the reality itself.

There had suddenly come to him, very long ago, one great moment in his own experience, when the word of command had reached him from the Lord himself, in the early dawn by the shore of the Sea of Galilee, and that command was that he should follow to the end.

"If I will," Jesus had said, "that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me."

Neither John nor Peter had fully grasped the meaning of these mysterious words which sank into their souls in the fervor of that hour. No doubt in those miraculous early days, when any marvel might happen, they had both thought of a definite outward coming in the clouds of heaven, with the last trumpet sounding, the dead being raised from their graves and the living caught up to meet the Lord in the air. But gradually it was made clear to them that this was not the real meaning of Jesus. So John himself had sought to modify in some measure what he had previously taught to his own young disciples; and as he continued to brood over that strange word "tarry till I come," the light had fully dawned upon him that this "coming," about which Jesus spoke, was not with outward observation, as if one should

cry "Lo, here!" or "Lo, therel" but spiritual and eternal. In his old age he had learned to look more and more for the kingdom of heaven within.

It was quite true nevertheless that there were to be earth-shaking events which would be signs in the outer world. But the day of the Lord itself, while it changed mightily the outward order, would only be visible before the eyes of men in the manifestation of fresh, young life which would follow the destruction of the old. "Now from the fig tree," he had said to them, "learn her parable: when her branch is now become tender and putteth forth its leaves, ye know of your own selves that summer is nigh at hand. Even so, ye also, when ye see all these things come to pass, know ye that he is nigh at hand, even at the doors."²

Therefore, when Jerusalem had been destroyed with terrible disaster, John himself knew at last that the time of his own departure was drawing near. He had "tarried" till the Lord had come; and now he was soon to follow his Lord beyond the veil, where he would see him face to face.

His children in the faith, who had gathered round him with such devotion, would be left alone; and they were sorrowing at the thought that very soon they would see his face no more. In the same way, long ago, in that upper room, John's own heart had been deeply troubled when the departure of Jesus had drawn near. So he could now intimately sympathize with them and feel their pain as if it were

² See Matthew 24. 33; Luke 21. 29-32.

his own. He longed to leave a message of comfort with them before the end.

Therefore he determined to tell over to them as simply as he could some of the things he had seen and heard in those first glorious days of discipleship, when he was young and Jesus was in their midst. We may reverently picture to ourselves how, in the stillness of his own heart and after long silent meditation, each new portion of his narrative was put before these young hearers whom he loved, in order to answer their own questions. Then John would consider again the difficulties which they had brought forward and would add something here and there to what he had first told them, leaving it to them to add their own idiom to it in their own Greek language. So they would sit at the feet of this last disciple who had seen the Lord, revering him next to Christ himself. They would put to him their questionings with all the freedom of true love, till their doubts were fully set at rest and they were able to grasp the truth.

The fourth Gospel has all the marks upon it of some such literary process. I have watched this same method in India, when a revered teacher and religious leader, like Rabindranath Tagore, takes his young disciples into his own confidence and collaborates with them. He reads over to them what he has first written, in order to get their own point of view upon it. Then he revises his manuscript and reads it once more. Thus out of the very heart of the group itself the theme is set forward at last.

But while the story of the Lord's life and death and rising again was in course of preparation (so I read the order of events) the world sky became still more threatening. Persecution was at the very door. It was "a last hour." So John left behind in their hands first of all a parting letter, which is perhaps the most beautiful that has ever been written by the pen of man. It is called the first Epistle of Saint John.

In this letter he tells them, as young men, to be brave and strong, because through their faith in Jesus they have already overcome the wicked one. He calls them, in every chapter, by the endearing name of "little children." His whole Epistle is filled with the one word "love." Yet that love is never a sentiment merely, but, rather, a strong passion within, to be shown forth in action.

It is not a vague emotion, but a steady direction of the will, tested always by deeds. "God is love," he declares, not in abstract ways, but because he has loved us in very deed. So they must love, in their turn, not in word only, but in deed. They must cling to this simplest of all truths, which is yet the deepest, that God himself is love. They must fulfill the simplest of all duties, which is yet the hardest—the "new commandment" of love. For as Jesus had loved them, they should also love one another. God's active love must be reflected in their own.

"Little children," he pleaded with them, "abide in him, that when he shall appear we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming."

And again he took up his Epistle and wrote the words, "Little children, it is a last hour."

After this he would go back to the story of the Word of Life, the Saviour of mankind. There are certain signs of incompleteness which make us think that all had not been fully and finally ordered when the end came. Some harsh sentences might have been left out, and there is a certain confusion in the text. Possibly, like the venerable Bede with his young scribe at Jarrow, so also John the aged was not able to give what he had dictated his own final revision. However that may be, this is certainly true, that nothing can detract from the uniqueness of the record as it stands. It is the one book which helps us to realize best of all the inward presence of the living Christ.

That the farewell chapters of the Gospel were written for these young followers of Jesus there can be little doubt. Their whole setting breathes with this one thought. "They shall put you out of the synagogues," their Lord tells them, "yea, the time cometh, whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God's service."

That "power of darkness,"³ which our Lord himself had experienced and had warned his apostles as certain to be fulfilled, was soon almost literally to be realized in their own young lives. It was for them a "last hour." On one side were all the forces of evil mustered against them, and on the other side was the serene presence of the Lord whom they loved, with his command, to be literally obeyed, "Follow

³ Luke 22. 53: "This is your hour, and the power of darkness."

thou me." As he had gone to his death, so might they have to suffer martyrdom also. The disciple was not greater than his Master. If they had persecuted the Master, they would persecute his followers as well.

All this is in the background—fear, alarm, persecution, suffering, death. But in the foreground of the picture is Jesus.

He, their Lord and Master, in his darkest hour had turned away from all personal grief to comfort his troubled friends, to cheer their drooping hearts, and to assure them of a victory accomplished. Therefore John the aged would now seek to draw these younger followers of Jesus away from any fear of that vast, powerful Roman world lying in the darkness. He would take them with him into the inner sanctuary, where they might meet with their Lord and hear his words of peace. He would set before them as clearly as he could the vision of their Lord, his calm majesty and his perfect love. He would tell them also about the Comforter whom the Father would send in Christ's name, even the Spirit of truth who should abide with them forever. And John would make very clear indeed to them the fact that the final victory of their faith was already won. "In the world," said Jesus, "ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."

So John would encourage the troubled hearts of those whom he loved to call his "little children." They were still strong, with the grand strength of youth, as they stood ready to face death itself. He

would draw for them the portrait of Jesus out of his own experience, in such a way that they would feel his beloved presence among them at Ephesus, just as John himself had seen him in his own youth in that upper room at Jerusalem. Only with a loyalty and obedience so personal, so tangible, so strong as that could they themselves remain calm and steadfast in face of the dark trial of persecution which lay before them, while they "kept the word of my [his] patience" and "loved not their lives unto the death."⁴

The wonder of all wonders was this, that these young disciples actually passed through the awful horror of Domitian's reign of persecution without a murmur, without flinching, and without even a cry for vengeance. In the Apocalypse, where the temper of the steel of Christian endurance had not yet become unbreakable, the cry of anguish is mingled with the cry for vengeance. The pure gold, to change the metaphor, had not yet been so refined seven times in the furnace that Christ's love alone remained. But in Saint John's first Epistle, and in the great outline of the fourth Gospel, a divine pity overshadows even that Roman world itself. "God so loved the world"—this great universal note of love is struck again and again; and it corresponds with the character and nature of God himself.

We also to-day, in our own distressed and troubled times, have been passing through the agony of a "last hour." We have seen the power of darkness, as it has overshadowed all the earth with wars and

⁴ Revelation 3. 10; 12. 11.

rumors of wars, making men's hearts to fail them for fear and for looking after those things that are coming on the earth when the powers of heaven are shaken. And we have longed to see one of the days of the Son of man and have not seen it.⁵

All the impressive tokens of the end of a world-period we have known with terrible exactness; and we have watched in them the outward signs of Christ's coming. Never, perhaps, before in modern history has the external prospect seemed more full of dread. The inner tension also has been no less grave. The fear comes back to the mind, quite constantly, that human nature itself may crack at last and civilization perish.

In such times of outward alarm and inward fear we too need to turn back to the quiet of that upper room, where the sanctuary has been prepared for our hearts to meet Christ in the silence. We too, like those young disciples at Ephesus, must sit at the feet of Jesus. Nay, more, we must humbly allow him to stoop down and wash *our* feet, so that we may be clean every whit. We need to come to him in true obedience and hear his word of command given to each one of us in turn: "Follow thou me."

And if we shrink back for a moment, fearing that his dear presence may be taken from us, he will say to us with compassion, "I will come again, and receive you to myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."

⁵ See Luke 17. 22.

CHAPTER VII

THE WAY OF JESUS

“Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me.”

HE disciples in the upper room had now laid aside their inward fears and were able to speak freely with their Master. They felt their hearts burn within them as he talked with them in that last intimate hour; and even the most silent among them were eager to ask him questions which had troubled them for long. Peter and James and John do not speak at this juncture. It is the less well known among the twelve who now lean forward with eager faces toward Jesus in order that they may receive from their Lord his parting words of love. Thomas and Philip and Judas (not Iscariot) are the three questioners, and in each instance Jesus, their Master, satisfies their anxious inquiries by a deeper revelation of himself. He is the one answer to all their questionings. His presence, abiding with them, will solve all their difficulties. In him alone they can find inward peace.

Thomas, in ignorance of the Lord's real meaning, asks blindly, “Lord, we know not whither thou goest;

and how can we know the way?" He was thinking that Jesus was about to start on some earthly journey. But Jesus makes the spiritual meaning quite clear. "I am the way," he says, "the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me."

Then Philip puts a question, which had evidently been long on his own mind. Jesus had spoken about going to the Father. Philip cries out, "Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us!" Again Jesus points to his own love for them as the complete revelation of the Father's heart: "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou, then, Show us the Father?"

Last of all Judas (not Iscariot), about whom we know nothing at all beyond this one sentence, asks in deep concern for others, "Lord, what is come to pass that thou wilt manifest thyself to us, and not unto the world?" Jesus explains to him very tenderly how it is only where there is the personal devotion of true love that he is able to reveal himself to the hearts of men. "If a man *love* me," he says, "he will keep my word: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings."

Without love in the heart the revelation of the Father is not possible. First of all, love itself must be awakened as it had been awakened in the twelve.

In each of these three answers the subject is carried on from one great theme to another. Out of

these very questionings of Jesus the highest spiritual truths are revealed. Life in him responds to life in them. His divine love meets their human love half way. They have thus been learning all the while that his Spirit will be with them to comfort them in unseen ways even after he has vanished from their sight. In this way he is gradually weaning them from outward things to the inward reality of his spiritual presence.

There is a very beautiful passage in the book of Exodus, where Moses is overwhelmed by the difficulties of the way that lies before him. So he cries to the Lord in his great trouble of heart, "Now therefore, O Lord, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, show me now thy way." And the Lord said unto Moses, "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest."

Most of us know the difficulty of facing bravely an entirely new situation which carries us into unknown paths. If, at such a moment, someone whom we love and trust comes near to us with a winning gift of confidence, and says, "Have no fear, for I will go with you every step of the way," then at once the dead weight of anxiety is lifted, and in his company we go on our way rejoicing. Even so Christ's presence will go with us on our own untried life's journey, and he will give us rest.

For the one thing needed, according to this Gospel of Saint John, is a simple generous heart of entire devotion to our Lord himself and to one another for his dear sake. Out of that personal loyalty and

deep affection peace will flow like a river; grace and truth will spring up as a fountain in a dry land; and in the wilderness of our barren lives waters of gladness shall break out and streams in the desert.

Therefore it is essential that this spirit of true love should more and more be made our own by living deeds and not by words alone, if we would dwell with Christ in God. "We know," says John the aged, with supreme conviction, "that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. . . . My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth and shall assure our hearts before him."

There is no fear in this love, but full assurance. For in such a sincere love as this there is opened up for us a new and living way to the Father, which enters into the holiest of all. This is the Way of Jesus. This is life eternal. For Jesus is the perfect embodiment of the Father's love to sinful men. He also gives back man's love to God, as he brings us to the Father's arms, forgiven and redeemed. Thus he completes the way, backward and forward, which leads to God.

Peter, with his big, impulsive heart, might blunder and fall back terribly into sin again and again. Nothing could have been more abject than his cowardly behavior when he denied his Lord and Saviour with a lie and a curse just at the critical moment when Jesus was most forsaken. It was the basest treachery on his part to act thus at such a time of trial. Yet

Peter was much forgiven because he loved much. And when in that early dawn, on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, his Master tested him thrice over with the deep heart-searching question, "Lovest thou me?" Peter's devotion of purest love for his Lord came back in such an overflowing tide that his heart seemed hardly able to contain it, and he cried out, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee."

At that very hour of renewed and plighted troth between the Lord and his chief disciple Jesus forewarned Peter that the end of his own discipleship must be a death upon the cross—a literal following of his Lord. "When thou wast young," said Jesus, "thou girdedst thyself and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not."

The evangelist adds the explanatory words, "This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God."

For ultimately and inevitably the Way of Jesus—the Way to the Father—leads the true follower of the Crucified along the same road that the Master trod. The servant cannot expect to avoid what the Master has suffered.

There is no place for weakness or self-seeking in this tremendous love. It must be strong as death. Like the Bride, in the Song of Songs, it must look "forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners." Many

waters cannot quench such love, neither can the floods drown it.

There is a passage in the chapter which I love most, near the beginning of the *Little Flowers of Saint Francis*. It is entitled "What is perfect joy?" It shows us the joyous journeying along that road which the mystics of the Middle Ages called "The Royal Highway of the Holy Cross." Saint Francis had vividly pictured earlier in the chapter the different kinds of outward humiliation which might at any time befall a member of his order—how he might be turned out into the snow on a bitterly cold and dark night with heavy blows of a knotted stick and yet be called upon to take all this suffering joyfully for the love of the dear Lord who was crucified. Then Francis turns to Brother Leo and says these concluding words: "If, with patience and gladness, thinking on the pains of the Blessed Christ, we suffer all these things, which we ought to suffer for the love of him, our Lord, then, O Brother Leo, write that here and herein is perfect joy! Therefore hear, Brother Leo, the conclusion of the whole matter. Above all graces and gifts of the Holy Spirit that Christ granteth to his beloved, is to overcome oneself, and willingly for the love of Christ endure pains and insults and shame and want: inasmuch as in all other gifts of God we may not glory, sith they are not ours but God's: whence saith the Apostle, 'What hast thou, that thou hast not received of God? And if thou hast received it of him, wherefore boastest thou as if thou hadst it of thyself?' But in the cross of tribulation and af-

fiction we may boast, sith this is ours: and therefore saith the apostle, 'God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.' "

One of these devoted saints of the Middle Ages belongs to our own eastern counties of England, Mother Julian of Norwich. Her little book called *Revelations of Divine Love*, written in the fourteenth century, is itself a perfect example of that Way of Love which leads through the cross to the Father. At one time the temptation came to Mother Julian that she might seek heaven without the cross. But she answered inwardly, with all the strength of her soul, "Nay, I may not: for thou, Lord Jesus, art my heaven." Then she saw Jesus before her, bearing his cross. "Thus," she writes, "was I learned to choose Jesus to my heaven, whom I saw only in pain at that time. . . . And this hath ever been my comfort, that I chose Jesus to my heaven, by his grace, in all this time of Passion and sorrow: and that hath been a learning to me, that I should evermore do so, and choose only Jesus to my heaven in weal and woe."

"Wouldst thou learn," she concludes, "thy Lord's meaning in this thing? Learn it well. Love was his meaning. Who showed it thee? Love. What showed he thee? Love. Wherefore showed it he? For love. . . . Thus was I learned in this that love was our Lord's meaning. And I saw full surely that ere God made us he loved us; which love was never slacked, nor ever shall be . . . and in this love is our life everlasting. In our making we had a beginning: but the love, wherein he made us, was in him from with-

out beginning: in which love we have our beginning: and all this we shall see in God, without end."

It would be impossible to express more perfectly than this the music of these farewell chapters of Saint John. The Son comes forth in love from the Father and returns in love to the Father. The Way is the way of the cross. In his coming and in his going, as he bears our frail human nature in all its temptations and suffers for all our sins, he reveals the heart of God. "Wouldst thou learn thy Lord's meaning in this thing?" says Mother Julian, "Learn it well. Love was his meaning."

When I first went up from school to the University more than forty years ago, the great Victorian Age of Cambridge New-Testament scholarship was drawing to its close. Lightfoot was dead, Westcott had gone to Durham, and Hort alone remained at Cambridge. He prepared for publication, just before his death, a volume of Hulsean Essays, called *The Way, the Truth, and the Life*, which had been shaping itself in his mind for more than twenty years. So deeply had this word of the Lord entered into his inmost being that he could never be satisfied with what he had written about it. To Westcott, the fourth Gospel was the heart of the New Testament, and he made its interpretation the main work of his own long life as a scholar and a man of action. He completed what F. D. Maurice had begun. But Browning did more than anyone else to help the lay mind to grasp clearly the true greatness of the fourth evangelist, for in "Saul" and "A Death in the Desert" and

“An Epistle” he made clear, in unforgettable verse, the central fact which Saint John seeks ever to explain, that in Jesus Christ the unknown and invisible God has been made known and visible at last to sinful men.

When Doctor Westcott was Bishop of Durham, he used to spend each summer vacation completing his literary work, either on the Yorkshire moors or on the seacoast, near Whitby. In those earlier years of my own life, when “hero worship” was a second nature to me, it was the greatest privilege of all to be allowed to stay with him and go on walks with him each afternoon, for Basil, his youngest son, was my intimate friend, and we used to spend our holidays together. Basil was already preparing to go out to India, where his brothers Arthur, George, and Foss had already gone, and therefore we used to ask the bishop endless questions concerning India and the East. He would often refer to Saint John’s Gospel and would tell us with deep conviction, that only in India, when Christian thought had developed there, would Saint John be fully understood. Since those golden days in my early life I have come to see more and more the wisdom of the aged bishop concerning the mind of the East.

One of his favorite quotations came from Irenæus. The phrase may be translated, “The Life of Man Is the Vision of God.”¹ He told us that this phrase

¹ *Vita hominis Visio Dei.* Saint Augustine, evidently recalling this passage in his Commentary on Hebrews 11. 16, writes: “They were wandering in search of a country. But with Christ as their guide they could not go astray. Their way was the vision of God” (*Via illis fuit visio Dei*).

was a marvelous recapitulation of Saint John's Gospel. The whole pathway of man's life, as it stretched out through all the centuries, was intended to bring us ever nearer and nearer to the Divine Life itself. The bishop would then quote to us, with deepest awe and reverence, the words:

“And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him.”

Such a perfect sentence as this from the Old Testament comes very near to the thought which underlies Christ's words to Thomas in the upper room, for in the Spirit of Jesus we can walk with God all the way. We are not wandering about in blind darkness, but are moving forward with a purpose, ever more and more toward the light.

It is true that there are still infinitudes in God's nature which remain outside our finite minds. But love, which is both finite and infinite, intensely personal and yet universal, is the one faculty whereby we may approach nearer and nearer to reality; and in our discipleship we may always put our love to the stern practical test of readiness to suffer with our Lord.

“Hereafter,” said Jesus to Nathanael, “ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.” The allusion to the old patriarchal story in Genesis of Jacob's dream is evident, and it gave to Francis Thompson, the poet, the thought of Jacob's ladder “set up 'twixt heaven and Charing Cross.”

In Jesus, Son of man and Son of God, the once

impassable and unbridgeable gulf between God and man, between heaven and earth, has been spanned. There are resting places on the way to the Father's house, but they are all mapped out and well known. Jesus himself is the Way, ever coming and going, ever the great High Priest, first entering for us into the holiest of all and then coming forth to his own people with blessing and forgiveness in his hands—the one Mediator between God and man.

Mankind—to follow the thought further—which had almost lost its way to the Father's home and was groping blindly after the true path, may now take heart at the good news of its heavenly origin and arise and return to the Father and be welcomed by the Father's embrace. For in Christ every barrier has been broken down; the middle wall of partition has been removed; the gates of sin and death have been unbarred. The Love which was with the Father before the foundation of the world has burst through all the barriers of space and time and has been born in lowliest form among men, has suffered and died, and has then returned to God carrying man's very nature purified and cleansed to the throne of God, accepted in the Beloved.

Human language strains at every turn to embody this one supreme thought of Saint John's Gospel. Like an inspired artist, the writer is ever trying to express his glowing thought even in a corner of his picture. Thus, as we saw, when Jesus lays aside his garments and takes the towel and girds himself and washes the disciples' feet and then puts on once more

his garments, the whole drama of heaven and earth is in his mind. Thus the "Word was made flesh and dwelt among us."

Yet always the writer comes back from the vast emotional background to the simplest practical deed of daily service. Devotion to the Lord and devotion to our fellow men are knit together. Love to God and love to man are identified. The one cannot exist without the other.

This simple personal devotion to Jesus as the one living Way to God was the earliest and deepest loyalty of the Christian Church. Even before the word "Christian" was used first at Antioch, the followers of Jesus were called the "people of the Way." Thus we read in the Acts of the Apostles, how Saul, breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the church, received letters from the high priest to Damascus, so that "if he found any that were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem." We know how Saul was stricken down on that journey and became himself a follower of the Way of Jesus.

In the midst of the ever-increasing complexity of modern life, which binds us to formal routine both in church and state, we long intensely to get back to this simple personal devotion as the center and crown of our own lives. In the East this thought of the Way, with a personal leader to guide, is very well known. The Kabir Panth and the Dadu Panth offer examples of such a course, which the religious life of India instinctively follows. May we not learn from

the East, where Christ and his disciples began their ministry of healing and blessing, to return once more to these simplicities rather than ourselves impose upon the East our own complex religious systems?

And if the words "No man cometh unto the Father but by me" appear at first sight to be exclusive, we shall do well to remember how Jesus looked round on the multitude and cried, "Who is my mother or my brethren? . . . Whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and my mother."

For not by any mere profession of his name shall we find acceptance, but, rather, by living in his Spirit. And he will welcome, at the last, those who never knew him at all and never called him "Lord," but were ready humbly to do the will of God and to serve the least of his brethren. For in that day "many that are first shall be last, and the last first."

CHAPTER VIII

LORD, SHOW US THE FATHER

“Philip saith unto him, Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.”

QOSSIBLY it would be true to say that at no period has the cry of Philip, “Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us,” been wrung from the hearts of thoughtful and humble men and women with greater intensity of pathos than in our own generation. For, since the end of the World War, gigantic forces, which seem on the surface to be entirely beyond our control, have made themselves openly manifest. Unless some miracle happens, they may fatally crush our whole civilization and lay it in the dust. In the terrible words of Hamlet, we have come

“. . . between the fell incensed points
Of mighty opposites.”

We shrink back in alarm for the future, realizing that only by the infinite grace of the divine mercy can we avert final disaster. The cry, “Lord, save us; we perish!” rises to our lips, as the fierce storms of

passion rise swiftly round us on every side and the winds and the waves are contrary.

Along with world-menaces such as these, the hard driving forces of economic pressure at our very doors, armed with new methods of mechanical speed, have so quickened the rate of living in our great cities that they have begun seriously to strain both the nerves and the minds of the toilers. They are crushing also with vandal haste the tender and delicate things which cannot possibly bear the pace at which life is being lived to-day. Much that was venerable with age and rich with old associations has already been lost beyond repair. The slow, beautiful growth of centuries has disappeared. In its place mass production pours out its endless articles which destroy simplicity and refinement and lead to the gravest problems of unemployment.

To pause for quiet meditation, to muse at leisure upon the deep things of the spirit, to set aside ample space for seeking the Divine Presence, these sheer necessities for the growth of the inner life are rendered more and more difficult of attainment for the majority of us, as we are hurried along by the rapid current of the stream which is carrying us—whether? The panorama of the outer world has become indefinitely extended by every mechanical means and appliance, until it remains with us all day long, even in our own homes. But the inner mansion of the spirit is no longer a dwelling-place where Christ is welcomed in the silence. The quiet time, each morning and evening, for silent prayer and communion

with God, which ought to bring peace in the heart, has gradually become curtailed until in many lives it has almost ceased to exist. The still small voice in the temple of the soul can hardly be heard amid the clamorous voices without. For this cause, perhaps, more than any other, restless worry has increased and the love of many has waxed cold.

One further event has happened. We have been taught in our own generation to look out with far different eyes into the mysterious universe which modern astronomy has now explored. We have been offered entirely new data. But while we acknowledge with astonishment the amazing facts which recent science has laid bare, we shrink back dazed and baffled before the immensities of time and space which have been mapped out in the heavens.

To our human spirits the new outlook given to us appears endlessly barren, with no message of love or pity. Such myriads of nebulæ carry no comfort to our hearts, and we cling once more to our dear mother earth and the intimate touch of things which we have learned most of all to love—the green fields with their beauty of spring flowers, the sunsets of autumn, the sound of the sea upon the shore, and our own homes filled with the play and laughter of children.

We look wistfully to the future. Will the pure gladness of things like these, and the simple joys of art and music, poetry and religious faith—those priceless treasures of man's inner life—be swept ruthlessly away by this insensate speeding up of modern living conditions, or even by some ultimate calamity of

war? Will these dear, tender things of the soul be dragged under by some last brute struggle for existence on an overcrowded planet? What is to be the appointed end? Whither are we drifting with such haste in a rudderless vessel on an uncharted sea?

The most serious thinkers who have looked out with steady gaze on what is happening to-day have very deeply felt the strain of this burden of the world's pain and have passed it on to others. There is a foreboding concerning the future which cannot easily be shaken off. Kagawa, the greatest Christian saint and prophet of the Far East, with terrible directness, speaks already in one of his books about the "collapse of Europe."¹ Since he wrote that word, in 1931, his own dear country, Japan, has turned to the same desperate remedy of appealing to force; and he has sought in vain to turn the hearts of those he loves toward conciliation and peace. Every day it is becoming clearer and clearer that the pace itself is "killing." Men and women are being driven forward against their will by a momentum which they are unable to resist. Those, like Kagawa himself, who are doing their utmost to stand fast against the current and preserve the spiritual values, are overwhelmed for the time being by the onrushing tide which is swiftly flowing in the opposite direction.

Individual men and women are sensitive to human suffering and wrong as never before; but the mass mind is driven on by panic fear and haunted by formless dread. We grope in the dark, searching for a

¹ Kagawa, *The Religion of Jesus*, Chap. V, p. 106.

hand of love to cling to in the midst of our troubled lives, and we cry out in our anguish, "Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us."

Once, on a bitterly cold night of hail and storm, a poor spent bird which had been caught in the black tempest, without shelter, dashed itself against the window of the room where we were sitting, dazed by the glare of the light and beating its pitiful wings in vain as it struggled to reach safety. We opened the window with difficulty: the wintry gust blew hard; and the bird fell fluttering to the carpet inside the room. One of us took it up tenderly with warm hands while its heart throbbed with fear. Then we placed it in some shelter for the night until the storm abated and it was able again to find its own freedom in the bright unclouded morning sky.

An experience similar to this occurred to me quite recently on a dark evening in the streets of London, when a friend who was a careful driver was taking me home with him in his motor car through the crowded suburban traffic. Two tiny children, the elder sister holding the younger, dashed suddenly across the dazzling lights, almost underneath the wheels. They both gave a sharp cry of pain, terrifying to hear, and the motor was stopped in a moment. We jumped out the same instant and held the little ones safe in our arms, while their limbs shook with convulsive sobs, frightened almost to death by their narrow escape from destruction. Our own hearts were beating with fear almost as fast as theirs. Then they looked up in our faces and realized that they

were safe in our arms, as we soothed away their fright, and their sobs gradually ceased.

Our individual human lives and the civilization we have built up by slow degrees—so frail and delicate—are in danger of being crushed beneath the cruel wheels of this mechanical age as they revolve faster and faster. We cling, dazed and terrified, to our Father's arms for succor and support. We cry out in our pain, "Abba, Father," as the danger draws nearer and nearer. And then, in that hour, we see Jesus standing by our side, saying, "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." He knows every step of our journey, for he has trodden the dark way before us. His voice comes to us, out of his own sorrow, as he says, "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."

For our cry to the Father, which is ringing in our hearts to-day, is the echo of that cry of his which he uttered, on the night of his betrayal, after he had passed from the upper room to the garden of Gethsemane. There the burden of the world's deep anguish was laid upon him. "He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him. . . . He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed."²

² Isaiah 53. 4, 5.

We read how his soul became exceeding sorrowful, even unto death, and he fell on his face to the ground and cried, "Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt." And being in an agony he prayed the more earnestly, "O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done."

After that prayer in the garden he went forth strong to meet even death itself in its most awful form of crucifixion; and when the dread conflict was over and the victory won, he commended his soul to his Father in perfect trust, saying, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit."

If along with him, our Lord and Master, we are patient and hold fast our confidence to the end, then even though the whole world appears to be against us, and the floods seem to overwhelm us, we shall be assured that while we pass through the waters our Father's love will be with us, upholding and sustaining us. For at the heart of this vast universe there is no dread darkness and barren emptiness, but the light of his glorious compassion and the joy of his forgiving love.

Our Father, whose character and nature of love is revealed to us in the face of Jesus Christ, does not stand outside our human struggles and failures, regardless of our pain and unwilling to stoop down to the dust for our sakes. His very name is Love—that Love which "suffers long and is kind," which "hopeth all things, endureth all things," and "never faileth."

He gathers us in his arms and carries us in his bosom. His heart is open to our cry, and as children clinging to his hand we may enter his kingdom.

Therefore when we cry out, in the night of anguish, "Abba, Father," we feel the touch of his hand in ours and our throbbing hearts are hushed into peace at the last. Through our very suffering, as we struggle to rescue mankind from its headlong course, we realize an inward fellowship with his suffering, who laid down his life for our sake. His spirit responds to our spirit. His heart of love beats with our love. He is one with us and we are one with him.

Thus we come at last, through suffering itself, to understand the words of the apostle where he says boldly, with deep joy and great content, "Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father, the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God; and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together."

Here, then, is the glorious liberty of the children of God wherewith we have been made free in Christ Jesus our Lord. We are no longer living in the darkness of fear, but in the light of his freedom and his love. We no longer feel ourselves to be strangers in the blank spaces of the Universe beyond this earth of ours, for his hand is stretched out to welcome us into his Father's house of many mansions, where he has prepared a place for us and is ready to receive us.

And though we may have to be tried and tested in the purifying fire of affliction, it is a refining process from which we must never shrink back. In his strength, made perfect in our weakness, we can go forward rejoicing, raising the song of love triumphant over death and sin and pain:

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or the sword? . . .

“Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him who loved us.

“For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

CHAPTER IX

THE COMFORTER

“If ye love me, keep my commandments, and I will pray the Father, and he will send you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever, even the Spirit of truth.”

ONLY as the new commandment of love was faithfully kept by the little band of disciples could the Spirit of Love abide with them and lead them into all the truth. For love is the great uniting factor. As their love to one another deepened they would feel the cry rising more and more in their hearts, “Abba, Father,” and the Holy Spirit would bear witness with their spirits that they were sons of God.

Gradually, as the farewell words of Jesus unfold themselves before us sentence by sentence, we find three great themes continually recurring, in varied order but at the same time very intimately connected. The new commandment of love leads on to the gift of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, and the gift of the Spirit leads on to prevailing prayer. In the supernatural strength of that love in Christ which the Holy Spirit confirms, even greater works than Jesus himself had done on earth are now made possible; nay, they should ask what they would in his name, and it should be done unto them.

These, then, are the three great intermingled refrains which sound again and again through the music of Jesus' words. We almost learn to watch for them and to hear their notes as the sentences rise and fall.

Sometimes it is the new commandment that comes first, and the promise of prevailing prayer follows. At other times the gift of the Spirit is linked very closely indeed to the new commandment. Little by little, without any fear of repetition, I shall try to make clear in these chapters the intimate connection between them; for there could be no joy greater to me in writing this book than to help loving hearts themselves to understand the joy of praying in the Holy Spirit of love and finding their prayers abundantly answered in the communion of saints.

Few words in the Bible are dearer to us all, and more deeply loved by poor and simple folk, than this beautiful name for the Holy Spirit—the Comforter. Yet in the earlier English of our forefathers, when the old version of the Bible was first published, the word was still more full of wonderful meaning and still nearer to the Greek than it is to-day. For it meant, according to its Latin derivation, the Strengther as well as the Consoler. It is the Holy Spirit's *strong* comfort that supports us and brings Christ's presence near to us. It is no weak word but carries always with it the meaning of strength. For the Holy Spirit conveys the omnipotence of love to the heart that is open to his comfort. He is the Lord and Giver of Life. As he makes intercession for us with unutterable yearn-

ings, he gives strength to our feeble prayers.¹ Where the new commandment is fulfilled, the Holy Spirit is all prevailing in the power of love and prayer. Thus, out of our very weakness, we are made strong by his mighty aid; and in the spirit of love we can do all things through Christ, who empowereth us both to will and to act according to God's own good pleasure.

There have been many occasions in my own life, I can truly bear witness, when every word that I have written was burning in my heart. Above all I have watched this mighty power of prayer where the little company, gathered together in Christ's name, have been of one heart and one soul. At such times the early chapters of the Acts of the Apostles have seemed in no way to go beyond the simple truth, when they have told of supernatural power and joy and peace filling the lives of humble men and women, so that they spoke as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Jesus himself had hitherto been the Comforter and Strengther of his disciples. Now, as he departs from them, their hearts are desolate. He consoles them, saying, "I will not leave you comfortless: . . . I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever."

The Holy Spirit would give to them, in spiritual ways, the very same strength and support which Christ had personally bestowed while he was with them. In every hour of trial the Comforter would be with them —nay, in their very hearts—strengthening them to endure to the end and bringing to them the unspeak-

¹ See Romans 8. 26.

able joy of Christ's own spiritual presence. They would also be able to receive at every time of need guidance about the future, for the Spirit of Truth would teach them and show them things to come.

Though Christ's presence would still be with them, when the Comforter was come unto them whom the Father would send in his name, there would be one great change which was now in truth expedient. For while Jesus was personally with them during his life on earth, the disciples could not help turning to him for outward direction on every occasion; and this, if persisted in, would be certain to dwarf their individual growth and make them feeble copies of himself, with no initiative of their own. For it is a common experience that one with a strong personality tends to weaken the characters of those who are closely associated with him, whenever they remain too long by his side and become dependent on him. The danger of mere imitation, even in the smallest details, becomes all the greater if the affection itself is of a clinging nature.

This danger I have experienced personally on a lesser scale in my own life. For at one time, when I was too eager to be continually present with the poet Rabindranath Tagore, whom I deeply loved, it became an oppression to him, because he saw with his fine instinct that it was weakening my own individual character. Therefore in the gentlest manner possible he warned me from this, and I have been much happier ever since, and my love has grown stronger and deeper.

Christ in no sense desired men and women of that clinging type to be pillars in his kingdom. "Watch ye," says the apostle, speaking in Christ's name, "stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong;"² and again he says "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life."³ And of himself he writes at the last, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith."⁴ It is men and women of such strong individual character whom Christ needs most of all for the work of bringing in his kingdom.

While the *Imitation of Christ*, by Thomas à Kempis, is one of the most beautiful books in the world, its title was not happily chosen by its author. For, strictly speaking, mere imitation or copying is not to be aimed at by the devout Christian. Rather, we have to strive earnestly for an inward daily renewal of the Christ-life, through the power of the Spirit. For this very reason the Lord said to his disciples, "It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I go, I will send him unto you."⁵

The meaning and purpose of this purely spiritual presence of Jesus goes very deep indeed, not only into the lives of individual disciples, but also into the inner life of the Christian religion itself. For it insures that the following of Christ shall always be living and progressive, not lifeless and imitative. It also allows

² 1 Corinthians 16. 13.

³ 1 Timothy 6. 12.

⁴ 2 Timothy 4. 7.

⁵ John 16. 7.

our Christian faith to be ever open to welcome new truth wherever it is to be found. It is impossible for a religion of the Spirit to remain static. The Spirit of truth will lead us into all the truth and show us things to come.

We can see this dynamic quality in the Christian faith immediately beginning to work, even in the very first days of the church. For when the Gentiles flocked in, the question immediately arose as to whether they should submit to the outward ceremonies of the Jewish law. If a wrong answer had been given, the Christian faith would have been blighted at the very outset, and those who held it might even have gradually disappeared as an unimportant Jewish sect. But Paul stood up with amazing boldness and declared that the only thing that mattered was to become an entirely new creation in Christ Jesus. There was neither Jew nor Greek, circumcision nor uncircumcision, . . . but only a new creation. So ready were the apostles to recognize the guidance of the Spirit, in all that was happening, that in the end they accepted Paul's position and the first great victory for a living, universal faith was won.

In the East I have seen again and again exactly the opposite characteristic—religion so bound hand and foot by dead custom and precedent that it seems almost impossible to gain spiritual freedom. All this would certainly have taken place very early in Christian history if Paul had not claimed from the very first the Magna Charta of the freedom of the Spirit. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is," he cried, "there is

liberty." He would not allow anyone to take away that freedom.

"God is a Spirit," said Jesus to the woman of Samaria, "and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."⁶ For the Father seeketh such to worship him."⁷

The very essence of the life of the Spirit is that it should not be bound down too closely by any symbols of time and place which would make it static, or local, or tribal. "The wind bloweth where it listeth. . . . So is everyone that is born of the Spirit."⁸

Wheresoever the Spirit of the living Christ has been tied down too closely to forms and ceremonies and institutions it has always inwardly striven to be free. That is why, as Clement of Alexandria has said, there is nothing less than a perpetual springtide in the Christian life. It is ever being renewed from within by the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life. Even where there is decay there is also renewal at the same time.

There are two sentences which stand out clearly, like great bulwarks of freedom, in Saint Paul and Saint John, revealing in common the supernatural glory of that first Christian age when all the future was at stake.

The former is that of Saint Paul, where he says, "Yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more. . . . If

⁶ John 4. 23.

⁷ John 4. 24.

⁸ John 3. 8.

any man be in Christ, he is a new creation. Old things are passed away; behold all things are become new.”⁹

There is here a startling paradox that delights us. For Saint Paul states that, even though he had known Christ himself after the flesh, this was now out of date. Old things—even old sacred memories like that—had passed away. Everything had become new. Christ was ever living, moving, acting through his Spirit: therefore there was no need to look back. He was stirring afresh every day the hearts of men and women by his Holy Spirit, and signs followed. He was making all things new. Therefore he, Paul, must be new also, an entirely new creation, not depending on the past or on any voice of authority in the past, but ever alive and inspired and alert, as the Spirit called him out along this adventurous path of the future. In order to be faithful to so high a purpose he must let the dead bury their dead and press forward into the Kingdom. He must, on the one hand, be himself, his whole self and nothing but himself; and yet (here was the height of the paradox) he could only find his whole true self by losing himself utterly in Christ. For now the living Christ had become the life of his life and the soul of his soul. So true had this become, that he could say with deep sincerity those tremendous words: “The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”

The second passage comes from Saint John’s Gospel.

⁹ 2 Corinthians 5. 16.

It gives a parallel thought, which Christ himself makes plain to those around him. "It is the spirit," he says, "that quickeneth. The flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life."

The whole stress here is laid on getting rid altogether of the dead idea of literalness or mere imitation—that hollow, profitless thing which produces only a second-hand, dead copy of a marvelous original. Christ's words and deeds were not to be bound down like that. They were "spirit" and "life." They conveyed a thousand shades of meaning to different people who heard them, and they would never die as long as there were fresh new minds to create their own interpretation of them. Thus they would live through all the ages. To bind them down to a single meaning would destroy their beauty and freshness. "The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life."¹⁰

This is true, in its own degree, of all great art, literature, music. Music, especially of the highest, creative type, is "spirit" and "life." The mere technique of it is dead in itself, but when the spirit of the musician and the artist flows through it, then it lives and moves and has its being in a spiritual realm. It is one of the spacious "mansions" of the Father's house. It can bring peace and joy to man's soul and make the despondent heart strong and brave. So, in a far higher degree, do Christ's words actually "live" throughout the ages; and men and women of different lands and different races and different characters find

¹⁰ 2 Corinthians 3. 6.

them indeed to be "spirit" and "life" in the midst of a decaying world.

Great words like these two texts from Saint Paul and Saint John concerning the life-giving Spirit within the church run through the New Testament, making it a living document which carries forward its inspiring message of Jesus from age to age. "He shall not speak of himself," Christ told them, concerning his Spirit, "but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you." In each new age he would quicken once more the souls of men, breathing into them the breath of life and lovingly enlightening the heart.

Thus the Christian faith became the religion of the Spirit. But the historical foundation was never for a moment left behind. The background of fact remained secure and counteracted all daydreaming and extravagant speculation. The Acts of the Apostles makes plain to us how hard the outward conditions were and under what stern pressure of persecution the victory of faith was won. The religion of the Spirit was also a practical faith.

The paradox was always present which Paul himself had emphasized. On the one hand, there was the concrete historic fact of Christ "born of a woman, born under the law," "of the seed of David according to the flesh," crucified on the gallows of the cross; yet, on the other hand, there was the spiritual fact of Christ risen from the dead, in the power of an endless

life, and able to impart that life to those who were intimately one with him in spirit.

Let me take an analogy from the realm of sound which has had a direct bearing on my own life and may help out the difficult thought. In my very earliest childhood there was one strange mystery of sound which had an extraordinary fascination for me—the sound of the sea as it beats upon the shore. At first my father and mother used to take us to the Northumbrian coast, which was close at hand. It was there, probably, that this fascination of the sound began to haunt me which moved me so deeply in later years.

There was one toy that was of golden value to me in this connection—a large shell, into which I used to listen almost for hours together, hearing the sound of the great ocean beating upon the shore. Whether that is the exact scientific explanation of the sound did not matter to me as a child. That shell was for me a whole universe of mystery and beauty; I could still, through this simple medium, regain the deep impression that its sound had made upon me. Wordsworth in "The Excursion" has given the mystery of it all in a few immortal lines:

"Even such a shell the Universe itself
Is to the ear of Faith: and there are times,
I doubt not, when to you it doth impart
Authentic tidings of invisible things."

Latter on in my life, after my father had begun his ministry in the Midlands, our visits to the seashore were much less frequent.

I remember one glorious holiday at Llandudno, when I wandered about all day listening to that sound of the sea, so infinite in its mystery—"as the voice of many waters, as the voice of a great thunder." It brought to me what Wordsworth has called "authentic tidings of invisible things." The poet himself had experienced the same feeling of awe; for he tells us how "in a season of calm weather," when the soul is perfectly still, we can hear with the spiritual sense the sound of "that immortal sea which brought us thither" and

". . . see the children sport upon the shore,
And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore."

But even Wordsworth had to acknowledge that these "intimations of immortality" became less and less distinct; and most of us would acknowledge that the poet was right when he confessed that they were vanishing and insubstantial things, however beautiful. They do not help us in the hard, rough-and-tumble of life, when we need God to be quite near to us as "a very present help in trouble." With all our sins and shortcomings, our failures and our misdeeds, we cannot reach the eternal and invisible God himself, who dwells in unapproachable light, unaided. We cannot go through the difficulties and trials of life without a Helper. We need, more than we can say, a Comforter, a strengthener, who will abide with us in all our daily temptations and help us each day so to purify our hearts that we may truly see God face to face. And for all this help to be tangible and per-

sonal we need One who will ever make Christ's presence so spiritually real to us that he, our Lord and Master, our Saviour and our Redeemer, whom we know personally and love personally, will become to us in actual experience our own daily Companion, closer than any brother, dearer than life itself.

The analogy of all this with that shell of my childhood days through which I heard the mysterious ocean may seem fanciful, but I have found it personally very helpful. For in the Word made flesh, the Babe of Bethlehem, the Crucified, the risen Saviour, we have the one concrete fact on which we need to focus all our dimly beautiful imaginings. We have the one central point from which all the crystallization of our highest thoughts about the eternal and infinite may begin. We have left the purely negative region of philosophical abstraction and are back once more in the dear, lovable, concrete world of flesh and blood, of shape and form, of individual and personal existence. "Neti, Neti" ("He is not that, he is not that"), was the negative conclusion of the metaphysical mind of the East, but Tulsidas expressed the deepest need of the human heart when he turned to the philosopher and cried, "Sir, show us the Incarnate!"¹¹

This close, living, practical touch with Christ through the Holy Spirit in our daily life is the very essence of our Christian faith. It is the mark of a living religion. It influences us from within and issues in living deeds of love. It brings these "authentic

¹¹ See *What I Owe to Christ*, pp. 72-76, for the development of this thought.

tidings of invisible things," about which Wordsworth speaks, right into our very midst as a daily experience and a constant source of joy. We know more and more what Saint Paul means when he speaks of Christ as the "image of the invisible God" and what the opening words of the Epistle to the Hebrews mean, where he is called "the effulgence of his [God's] glory, and the very image of his substance." We know also what is meant in Saint John's Gospel, when Jesus says to Philip: "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." For this concrete and tangible thing in our Christian faith makes it ever living and active within us, so that it meets our deepest human needs and at the same time leads us direct, purified, and cleansed, into the presence of God himself. It brings God near to man. It makes that eternal and immortal Love which is at the heart of the universe visible and effectual in our finite lives.

As we grasp this spiritual strength which is thus freely offered to us we may surely take courage from the fact that even those very disciples, whom Jesus had chosen to be his apostles, were weak and fallible men like ourselves, sadly lacking in moral courage at the first and dull of spiritual understanding. But after the day of Pentecost, when they were "filled with power and the Holy Spirit," as the Acts of the Apostles relates, they gave their lives entirely over into their Lord's hands and through his enabling grace were able to say, "I can do all things through Christ who empowereth me."

That first century of the Christian faith was the

most marvelous age of spiritual victory over material forces in all human history. The power of the Holy Spirit, working mightily within, was so great that it was able to crack the hard molds of convention in that ancient Roman world and to run deep beneath the surface of society, cutting everywhere new channels of its own.

In the joy of the glorious freedom of that new life of the Spirit of Jesus, men and women who were quite ordinary and commonplace people did extraordinary and uncommon things. The very weakest often proved the strongest. Slaves and freedmen and those of no account whatever in the world's estimation became valiant heroes of the new faith, ready to lay down their lives for Christ's sake. Their own bewildered and fearful hearts became suddenly filled to the brim with a strange new courage and amazing fortitude. Young and old, men and women, and even children, were found ready to face death itself at any moment without flinching. As the Epistle to the Hebrews says, they were "destitute, afflicted, tormented (of whom the world was not worthy)."

Throughout all these tremendous trials of their Christian faith they were noted for two qualities which shone out in their personal characters as individuals and made men take knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus. They had a joy in the midst of suffering that no earthly power could destroy; they also had the gift of peace in their inmost hearts that no suffering, however great, could take away.

One further vital fact needs to be emphasized relat-

ing to the Christian community. The Christ-life could never have been lived at such a high level if individual Christians had remained in isolation, separated from one another. But they were of "one heart and one soul" continuing "instantly in prayer." Their strength came from this unity and from the certain knowledge gained from inner experience that where two or three were gathered together in Christ's name he was in their midst. Thus the new commandment was fulfilled and in the power of the Holy Spirit the "greater works" were done.

What happened in the first century of the Christian faith, with such results, can surely happen in our own day if we are ready to make a complete surrender of our hearts to the living Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit, for he, the Lord and the Master, has not left us comfortless. He is with us still through his strengthening and empowering Spirit. He is ready by the same Spirit to guide us into all the truth and to show us things to come.

The younger generation of men and women, to whom is being committed more and more, as each year passes by, the guidance and control of the new world forces making for peace and good will to all mankind, is called upon to face a task requiring more strength of conviction and more calm serenity of steadfast will than that of any previous age. World unity and brotherhood have been brought physically near just at the moment when world forces of evil threaten ultimate disaster. The outward communications between the races of mankind have been sud-

denly opened, and it depends entirely on the inner spirit among them whether the new opportunity is used for good or evil. Selfishness—racial, national, individual—is the great enemy to world brotherhood; and selfishness is a spiritual force.

Human nature, as we know it in ourselves and see it in society, is too feeble, of its own strength, to cope with these gigantic powers. Therefore anxious leaders of mankind are looking wistfully to find new sources of spiritual re-enforcement.

We are thus continually brought back from our own human impotence to God's strength. We know that the inexhaustible divine power is with us still. In hours of greatest darkness Christ will be our Light; and we shall hear him saying to us, as his Spirit comes afresh into our lives, "Lo, I am with you all the days, even to the end of the world."

CHAPTER X

ASK IN MY NAME

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father. And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it."



HE promise of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, and the kindred promise of the greater works which may be wrought through prayer offered in Christ's name, appear to be two aspects of one great theme, as Saint John tells us so simply in the story of our Lord's farewell words to his disciples before he was parted from them. Origen, the most devoted in his love for Christ among the early Greek Fathers, has described the spiritual life in Christ as one continuous prayer. The phrase not only carries beauty with it but is charged with practical significance, for the new life in Christ is filled with joy and love which overflows in prayer and thanksgiving without ceasing. Thus the whole Christian life becomes one prayer.

As we follow the main thought of these verses in Saint John's Gospel from the washing of the disciples' feet to the new commandment of love, and again from

the fulfillment of that love to the gift of the Holy Spirit, we shall find that we have a sequence leading directly forward to prayer in Christ's name which brings fullness of blessing with it. The sequence is in accord with the true development of the inner life in Christ.

Let us, then, think out together more closely still the meaning of this great prayer sequence, which carries us on from conscious weakness to spiritual power. It will be well also to examine ourselves, in order to find out what may be lacking in our own prayer-life. For there is no deeper need among sincere and earnest Christians to-day than to come back to the inward experience of the true spiritual power of prayer. The rapid changes which are taking place in modern civilization are tending to crowd out the interior life of prayer altogether; and if we are not careful a state of atrophy may set in from which recovery would be well-nigh impossible.

While I was writing this book, at Woodbrooke, among young, eager students who come from every continent of the world and from different races and nations, the request was brought to me from all sides that I might give a series of lectures on the subject "Christ and Prayer," based on these farewell chapters in Saint John's Gospel. It moved me very deeply indeed to find that a request of this kind should be made with such spiritual earnestness behind it; and it moved me still more, when I spoke, to watch the faces of those who listened, and to find out afterward, from the inquiries put to me, how difficult the prayer-

life had become under modern conditions. It will not be possible in the present book to deal in detail with the practical thoughts concerning the *method* of the prayer-life¹ about which I spoke at Woodbrooke. Here my object will be, rather, to seek to explain one or two at least of the great *principles* of prayer, which have become like a second nature to me from long brooding over them, and also after continually testing them in practice. I can only give, with the deepest sense of my own shortcoming, that which I have received from the Giver of all good gifts to men.

One such principle I would put at the very forefront, because the longer I live the more certain I am of its truth. Love in the heart is the true measure of prayer in the soul. If we are growing in love, the prayer-life is certain to become more and more real to us. That is why these chapters in Saint John's Gospel and his whole first Epistle are so vitally precious to us, for they bring us directly into the presence of that deep abiding love of God at its highest point; and love to God with Saint John is never for a moment separated from love to man. "Beloved," says the writer—and the words cannot be too often repeated—"let us love one another: for love is of God; and everyone that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love."

John of the cross, who lived many centuries later than John the aged and was a noble pioneer in the

¹ But see last chapter, on "The Practice of Prayer," where some help in this direction has been offered.

life of prayer, explains how love is the very substance of prayer's spiritual nature; because love is itself the highest form of communion between person and person, spirit and spirit. Love unites the soul to God and also to our fellow men. Therefore all life must be one devoted act of love expressed in prayer; for this is love's true function. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Love. The Spirit's movements in the heart of man are the ground of all prayer, wherever it is effectual in its inward working.²

Mother Julian, of Norwich, makes plain in her own gentle, womanly way the same principle of love as the basis of all true prayer. In her *Revelations of Divine Love* she tells us how Christ said to her in one of his "Showings" these great words: "I am the ground of thy beseeching." This saying of Jesus she seeks to explain to us afterward in a very remarkable sentence of her own.

"Beseeching," she writes, "is a true, gracious, lasting will of the soul, oned³ and fastened into the will of our Lord by the sweet, inward work of the Holy Ghost." The more I ponder over that sentence of Mother Julian the further I find it takes me in the spiritual life.

We turn to the Eastern church, and among the simplest, humblest folk we find the same outpouring of the heart in prayer and thankfulness when the new life in Christ blossoms forth. "At times," one pilgrim

² See *Golden Sequence*, by E. Underhill, p. 78. I have ventured to expand the thought.

³ That is, made one with.

relates, "I felt a burning love for Jesus Christ and for all God's creation. At times sweet tears of thankfulness to the Lord streamed involuntarily from my eyes, and a comforting warmth of the heart streamed through my whole frame, and in rapture I felt all around me the presence of God. Not only in my inmost soul did I feel this, but also all outward things invited me to love and give thanks to God: men, trees, plants, beasts—everything seemed so familiar; everywhere I found the imprint of the name of Jesus Christ." "All creation," he adds, "testifies to the love of God for men, and everything yearns and praises God."⁴

That yearning and praising, as love overflows in the heart toward all creation, meets us again and again. It is what Saint Paul calls "praying in the Holy Spirit." In the highest moments prayer and praise—yearning and joy, so intimately intermingle that they become one act of the soul.

Perhaps the fullest and noblest passages in Saint Paul's writings, where this overflowing joy and inward yearning mingle in one stream, may be found in his letters written during his captivity in Rome. His whole heart goes out to those who may at any time have to undergo the same imprisonment from which he suffers. "God is my witness," he writes, "how I long after you all in the tender mercies of Jesus Christ."⁵

He turns instinctively to prayer and thanksgiving.

⁴ Arseniew, *Mysticism and the Eastern Church*, p. 117.

⁵ Philippians 1. 8, 9.

So he prays fervently that their love may abound more and more; that their inner life may be strengthened with all spiritual might; that Christ may dwell in their hearts by faith; that they may be rooted and grounded in love; that they may be able to comprehend the breadth and length and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that they may be filled with all the fullness of God.⁶

The words crowd over one another in the apostle's mind as he tries to express the deep yearning in his heart, which can hardly be put into language. What is even more noticeable is the joy in the midst of acute suffering with which his prayers are mingled. Joy is the central theme of these Epistles. "Rejoice in the Lord, alway: and again I say, rejoice." "Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe."⁷

The word "joy" rang through the first days of the Christian Church like a trumpet call, and the weakest of those early saints and martyrs, in the joy of the Spirit, proved valiant and strong.

When I have pondered deeply over this essential relation of love to prayer—love to Christ the Head and to every member of his body—it has become more and more clear to me why the commandment of love must be perfectly fulfilled, and the Holy Spirit of love must dwell in the heart, if prayer is to be entirely effectual

⁶ Ephesians 3. 17-19.

⁷ Philippians 3. 1; 4. 4.

and fruitful in its inward working. The figures of the body and its members, used by Saint Paul, and the True Vine and its branches, employed by Saint John, have been the greatest help in this connection.

Let me anticipate for a moment the next chapter in this book and write concerning the True Vine. There is first the purging, or cleansing, of each single branch so that it may bear more fruit. Then, secondly, through the vine with all its branches the life-stream must flow freely. Where there is no flow of the life-stream, the branch is withered and in the end becomes dead and is cut off.

Using this almost perfect imagery with regard to prayer, we can see the deep need both of the cleansing of our hearts and also of the free flowing movement of the life-stream of the Holy Spirit of love, uniting us with one another in Christ Jesus, if our individual lives are to bring forth much fruit in prayer. Any interruption of the flow of the Spirit of love destroys the prayer sequence. There is a daring phrase in Saint John's first Epistle. He writes that if a brother commit a fault, we should pray for him and *give him life*. Our very prayer, he says, gives life. The life of love in us reaches the brother who has sinned and cleanses him, bringing to him new life in Christ.⁸

Let me venture to take a very homely illustration from a more mechanical area of nature. Those who have anything to do with wireless, or with electric currents, know well that if there is any interruption in the ether or some flaw in the conducting wire, so

⁸ See 1 John 5. 6.

that the circuit is not complete, the electric power becomes lost. If, on the other hand, the circuit, either along the waves of the air or along the conducting wire, is complete, the whole power of the current is available for all kinds of uses.

In order to make doubly clear this process whereby prayer reaches its highest point through love, let us go back to the personal experience of Saint Paul in his deepest moments and watch the heroic struggle whereby his whole life was transformed until he became a man of prayer in Christ Jesus his Lord. The language he uses differs from the simple meditative sentences of Saint John. It is more dramatic and forceful. Yet we can feel throughout that the vital experience of both is the same.

First of all, when the full sense of condemnation of sin in his own flesh descends upon him, he cries out, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Here is the first stage of "cleansing."

Then with unspeakable relief and thankfulness he finds the chain of sin and death broken by Christ's forgiveness. A gloriously fresh life of utter devotion to Christ absorbs his whole being. "The law of the Spirit of life," he cries, "in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." That is the second stage of overwhelming love—love for Christ and love for all creation.

Paul feels now that in Christ he can approach the Father with all the intimacy of a little child and make known his needs and his longings not only for himself

but for the whole world. At first, he says, he hardly understood how to pray as he ought, but the Spirit of love—the Spirit of sonship—within him helped his infirmities, making intercession for him with unutterable yearnings.⁹ And the whole creation was united in those yearnings as it looked forward to its own redemption along with the redemption of the sons of God.

Here again, in Saint Paul, the chain of prayer is complete. I have very rapidly paraphrased one of the most vivid records of the growth of the life of prayer in a great and noble soul that is to be found in all literature. There are passages in Saint Augustine which come very near to it, but I know no other. From a different angle it represents the same prayer cycle as that given to us in Saint John. Love is clearly at its base. Love carries Paul all the way through. The cry at the end, "We are more than conquerors through him that loved us," conveys the same note of victory which sounds in the words of Jesus: "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."

It is true that the direct emphasis on the mutual love of the disciples one to another in Christ which completes the chain in Saint John is not actually present in Saint Paul's words here. But the noblest expression of that mutual love is given us by Saint Paul himself in his parable of the body and its members, which I have already mentioned. It contains the words: "Whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honored, all the

⁹ See Romans 8. 26.

members rejoice with it.”¹⁰ No more beautiful setting to the “new commandment” of love could possibly be given to us than these words, and Saint Paul always carries the idea in his mind.

When we go further and ask ourselves how this amazingly vivid experience concerning prayer in the Holy Spirit was gained, we can trace in the Acts of the Apostles its actual foundation. For there in that upper room in Jerusalem, after their Lord had departed, we read how the apostles continued instant in prayer; how they were of one heart and soul; and how they were gathered together with one accord in one place. “And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.”¹¹

So overpowering was the effect upon them when the Divine Love came down at Pentecost that to those who were outside they seemed dazed and mad and drunken with new wine at this great moment when they spake in ecstasy and were filled with the Holy Spirit. Yet this mighty power within them became at once so marvelously exercised and controlled that the “greater works” which Christ had promised began from the first to be made manifest. “Men took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus.” The apostles asked for wonderful things to be done in Christ’s name and they were accomplished.

Not at Pentecost only did this mighty power descend, but later on also signs were wrought, through

¹⁰ 1 Corinthians 12. 26.

¹¹ Acts 2. 2.

the Holy Spirit, which showed that God was in very deed in the midst of his people. Those around them recognized the vitality of the new love which had come into the world. Perhaps the two chief marks of that first age were the unquenchable joy visible in the midst of outward suffering and the inward peace which passed all human understanding. Never in the history of man had such a movement of the Spirit been experienced as this, and it carried all before it.

Those supernatural days, with their new springtime of radiant joy, soon passed away. Before the New Testament closes we have sad records showing how the light of faith and hope and love had already become dim in many churches. In the book of Revelation the Spirit thus rebukes the church in Ephesus: "I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works. . . . He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."¹²

When love thus began to wax cold, the glowing fire of Pentecost died down in the hearts of men. Yet for all future ages the radiant beauty of those first days remains ever fresh and new.

Once, in the remote fastnesses of the Himalaya Mountains, high up at the foot of the eternal snows, I watched a clear stream of rushing water, sparkling in the sunlight. It had burst forth from between two huge granite rocks. Then it dashed onward, on its way to the plains, with a power that nothing could

¹² Revelation 2. 4-5, 7.

stop. The whole picture seemed to me a symbol of that stream of living water which flowed forward, carrying all before it, in that first onrush of the Spirit at Pentecost.

That "pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb"¹³ has never ceased to flow. In every century the overwhelming joy of the life in Christ our Lord finds its fresh outlet in some devoted soul, now an Ignatius of Antioch, now a Saint Basil or Augustine, now again in a Saint Bernard or a Saint Francis, a Saint Catherine or Saint Theresa—the glorious roll of saints and martyrs goes on right down to our own times. And in these latter days a fresh spring of living water of joy and hope has sprung forth in those far-off lands across the seas where the faith of Christ is still in its first new beginnings. For we witness again the same Holy Spirit of love dividing to every man his gifts severally as he will.

"The religion of Jesus," cries Kagawa, from Japan, "is a religion of resurrection. . . . It is the Spirit of the victorious Sufferer to take upon himself the pain of even *one* sick soul in order to bring him back to life. Jesus did not suffer for the healthy ninety and nine but to restore the *one* that was lost. So long as there is a man like him, the rain of hope pours down upon this ugly human life. I give tears with thanks for Jesus and his death."

Most of us have heard of Kagawa's life, with its incredible suffering for Christ's sake. There are also

¹³ Revelation 22. 1.

words that he has written which show the spirit with which he bore his sufferings. One noble sentence is this: "Heaven's rain of mercy and joy, which wells up from my soul's depth—this is my portion." We trace in him the authentic mark of joy realized in the midst of pain which is the "sign of an apostle." Thus we can see that "first love" of the apostolic age renewed in living personal ways in the Far East to-day.

Here are some of his words about woman and motherhood in the Christian experience.

"It was women," he writes, with true insight, "who stood by the cross to the last moment. While men are murderously firing upon one another, it is women who under the Red Cross are working to rescue the wounded and the sick. Women visit houses of ill fame. Women are far more moral than men. Women as a rule have less of a criminal tendency. It was the mother of Jesus who stood by the cross to the very end. In the slums I frequently meet great women who are mothers. It is those women whom I respect in the slums. Mothers are great! Since the early days there have been many instances of prodigal sons reformed by the love and the prayer of their mothers.

. . . The blade that was thrust into the heart of Jesus pierced the heart of his mother. From his birth Jesus was the kind of person who would have the sword hanging over him; and Jesus did not forget his mother in the last moment, but intrusted her carefully to John." In words like these, the heart of the East is one with the heart of the West; and West and East bow down together before the glory of the cross.

The same story might be told at length of India with its ever lengthening roll of saints and martyrs. But I have already given elsewhere the record of that living personal experience of the love of Christ which has burst forth in pure joy and gladness from Indian hearts.¹⁴ Therefore I would rather pass on at this point of my story to Africa and the islands of the Pacific.

No incident is more full of beauty, revealing the amazing love of Christ, than that of the three young Christian lads in Uganda who had been left all alone after the missionaries had been expelled in the days of the great persecution. At the time when they had to suffer a fiery martyrdom, because they would not deny the faith, they were heard by those who were present singing the children's hymn, "*Killa siku tunsifu*" ("Daily, daily, sing the praises") as they gave up their lives for Jesus' sake.

I have traveled in Uganda and have been welcomed by the descendants of those who went forward with joy in their hearts to meet the fiery trial in the name of Christ their Lord. It has been a delight and wonder to me to see the transformation of inward character wrought in those whose forefathers were born, lived and died under a terror of murder and witchcraft, of lust and hate, such as now can hardly be imagined.

Again I have spent days among the aboriginal Fijians in the South Pacific and have sat down at the sacred communion meal of Christian love with those

¹⁴ See Chap. V, pp. 118-125.

whose ancestors were head-hunters and cannibals. Living among them I have witnessed such pure devotion to Christ and such strength of Christian character that it has brought to my mind the fresh beauty of those earliest days when the first disciples of Jesus joyfully gave up all that they had to follow Christ their Lord.

It would seem as if in these distant lands where Christ's love has only recently been made known the fervor of the apostolic age will repeat itself in new and wonderful ways. God has again chosen the weak things of the world and things that were of no account to confound the mighty, "that no flesh should glory in his presence."¹⁵

May we not also, in deepest penitence for our failure and lack of faith, point to new and hopeful signs in the older lands of Christendom which seem to show that the same glorious renewal of the Christian life is being witnessed among ourselves? Wherever these signs are apparent it is always the deepening of the spirit of prayer which has wrought this spiritual change.

The remarkable revival of spiritual devotion to Christ as Saviour and Lord which has come through the Oxford Group Movement began in the humblest manner through prayer and penitence and faith. For it was in this way that the founder himself, Frank Buchman, became a living witness for Christ, and was inspired with the ideal of his new work. He had been ordained, and, just like John Wesley before his con-

¹⁵ 1 Corinthians 27, 29.

version, he had been earnestly observing the forms of the Christian religion, but there was no white heat of conviction within. Then, one day, in a mood of deepest dejection, he entered a little out-of-the-way country church, near Keswick, where a woman was speaking about the cross of Christ. He did not even know her name, but something in what she said concerning the Saviour who died for all mankind touched him to the inmost depths of his heart and marked the turning point in his whole life.

He started immediately with an act of penitence, writing six letters of apology to men against whom he had felt personal bitterness. At the top of each letter he wrote the words,

"When I survey the wondrous cross,
 On which the Prince of Glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
 And pour contempt on all my pride."

Thus he began at once with an act of self-humbling at the foot of the cross and found the love of Christ aflame within as he had never felt it before. From that simple beginning the Oxford Group Movement arose. Since then it has spread to every continent and has brought about in every land a revival of Christian faith and practice.

At this point I feel bound to bear a personal witness, for I should be ungrateful indeed if I failed to do so, and what I write will illustrate the effectual power of prayer in the name of Christ.

In a time of great physical strain, while I was in

America, I had been asked suddenly by cable to go out to South Africa on the gravest racial issue. The whole Christian position appeared to me to be at stake, and it was imperative to accept the call. Therefore I had hurried over from New York to London on my way to Capetown and was worn out with the burden of anxiety which had been unexpectedly laid upon me.

It happened that the leaders of the Oxford Group were at that time gathered together at Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford, and on the last evening before starting for South Africa I stayed with them and spoke of my great need, asking earnestly for their prayers. They gave me their fullest assurance of constant spiritual help.

From that time forward, the whole aspect of things began to change owing to their personal support. In South Africa I received the assistance of the group in such a way that door after door was opened. In this silent manner, by earnest prayer and deepest sympathy, the cause which I had gone out to assist succeeded. What was impossible for man was made possible by God. What was asked in Christ's name was done, according to his promise.

One more story remains to be told which goes down to the inner depths of my own life in the East. The one dearest friend of all, who taught me most truly to understand and love the heart of India, was Susil Kumar Rudra, of Delhi. He was one of the noblest Indian followers of Jesus in the generation that has just passed away. No Christian in India was more

deeply respected by Hindus and Mohammedans alike, for he bore faithful witness to Christ his Lord and Saviour by the quiet strength and beauty of his own devotion. To me personally he was more than a brother, and at the most critical time of all I owed everything to him.

Yet though his Christian faith thus shone out like a light set on a candlestick that could not be hid, he used to tell me how, during his university days in Calcutta, he had come at one critical time to the state of doubting everything and disbelieving the fundamentals of the Christian faith itself. But one thing held him fast. He had been invited to live with the Oxford Brothers of the Epiphany, in the Oxford Mission compound, Cornwallis Street, and thus to share with them their early morning and evening devotions, while he attended university lectures during the day.

Those quiet times of prayer, as he lived with the Brethren, brought back his own faith to its true center in Christ. He told me how Father Willis used to continue in prayer late in the night, and how sometimes, long after midnight, he would see a light burning in his room and see him still at prayer. Yet he would be the first to rise and go round, in the early hours of an early Indian day, calling in a deep bass voice to awake the Brethren. He spoke also of Charles Gore, who remained in the Oxford Mission for a time and helped him with his wise and loving counsel. His own love for Father Brown, who died only a few months ago, was deepest of all. "My faith in Christ," he once

said to me with deepest emotion, "I owe entirely to those men of prayer."

So the chain of prayer in Christ's name is never broken. It leads on from strength to strength.

CHAPTER XI

I AM THE TRUE VINE

"I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. . . . If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples."

FRA UGO BASSI'S sermon in the hospital, which Mrs. Hamilton King has related with such pathos in her poem "The Disciples," makes the beauty of our Lord's saying, "I am the true vine," more fully appreciated by all those who are brought face to face with suffering and have themselves suffered. This section of her long poem has been printed and reprinted over and over again. It is well known in hospital wards in many lands. I have witnessed personally how great is its power to give comfort to the heart when the poor body, in its pain, can find no outward relief.

She pictures Fra Ugo Bassi coming to the Hospital, in Rome,

" . . . one day in March
When all the air was thrilling with the spring,
And even the sick people in their beds
Felt, though they could not see it."

There, in the ward, where pain is everywhere apparent, he preaches to the sick folk his sermon on the True Vine and its branches. He shows them how the fruit of the vine can only come to perfection when the pruning knife has done its sharp cutting work. For the one feature of the vine which distinguishes it from the olive and all other fruit-bearing trees is the suffering it is obliged to undergo if the yield of its grapes is to be abundant. It would even seem as if each branch had to be cut down almost to the central stem itself if the grapes are to come to their fullness.

“And as it grows, it is not free to heaven,
But tied to a stake; and if its arms stretch out,
It is but crosswise, also forced and bound;
And so it draws out of the hard hillside,
Fixed in its own place, its own food of life.”

In a remarkable little book, called *Everyday Life in the Kingdom of God*, Eric Hayman has described in an allegory this sharp process of pruning in our own lives. His allegory represents Jesus as leading forward a group of young disciples, step by step, along this very difficult and untrodden path of fruitful suffering. The narrative proceeds:

“The quickened memory made possible some new measure of understanding; and there came a strange, quiet listening. ‘The work,’ said Jesus, ‘that I have called you to do is my work, and it must be done as I have seen it. The fruit you are to bear must be lasting, abiding fruit; and for that fruit-bearing, you must be cleansed.’

"What did he mean? The worthless branches might be cut away: one expected that.

"It was less easy, however, to understand when the branches, from which abiding fruit might be expected, were also cut back further and further, until the pruned vine seemed nearly all stem, with the branches merely as shoots springing from the very heart of the vine. But thus alone can they bear more fruit. 'Thus alone,' he said, 'can ye be my disciples, and no longer the knights-errant of your own dreams.' "

In other parables, such as the Good Shepherd, the Light of the World, the Bread of Life, the Door, the Fountain of Living Water, Christ stands outside as the Giver and we are the receivers of his bounty. But here the branches and the vine are one; nay, in a sense the branches *are* the vine and the vine is made up of the branches. What the vine suffers is felt all along the branches, and the fruit itself comes out of that suffering.

"The Vine from every living limb bleeds wine:
Is it the poorer for that spirit shed? . . .
Measure thy life by loss instead of gain,
Not by the wine drunk, but the wine poured forth.
For love's strength standeth in love's sacrifice,
And whoso suffers most hath most to give."

Thus the whole life of each branch and its fruit-bearing power lies in the vine. We have to say, with Paul, "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." For Christ continues to pour forth his life-blood for mankind through us. No one who is thus a living branch

of the True Vine can afford to be the “knight-errant of his own dreams.” He hears the word from Christ, “Follow me!” and obeys.

Throughout the whole of my life, with all its wide and varied experiences, I have never known anyone who came so near to the Word of the Cross¹ in devotion to his Lord as Sadhu Sundar Singh. Nor have I known anyone by whom suffering for Christ’s sake was so joyfully and faithfully endured. He was a branch of the True Vine, so closely pruned and cut away, by blow after blow of the sharp knife of pain, that he came closest to the heart of the Vine.

What a devoted life he led! How marvelously faithful! And what abiding fruit it has borne!

Hundreds of years hence the story of Sadhu Sundar Singh’s life will still be told all over the East, as he followed the footsteps of the Crucified, for the East cherishes the memory of those who suffer in their search for God when they have reached this highest point of vision and can say, “I have seen.” Age after age the Hindu pilgrims have endured suffering as they have climbed up the steep mountain track to Badrinath Temple in the recesses of the Himalayas amid the snow and ice. Sundar Singh’s Christian longings carried him across the same mountain heights on his pilgrim’s way, not to seek individual salvation, but, rather, to carry into unknown regions beyond the unsearchable riches of Christ.

When I saw him for the last time before he disappeared within those huge mountain fastnesses,

¹ See 1 Corinthians 1. 18, 23.

going out into that solitary land to meet his death, he was worn and tired almost beyond recognition. He had come to meet me in Simla, and we held quiet communion together. The moment that the name of Jesus, his Lord and Master, was mentioned his face lighted up. His body was cruelly worn with innumerable hardships bravely undergone. He was very different in appearance from the young Sadhu I had known and loved twenty years earlier, when I was with him at Kotgarh. But his face had become more Christlike even than it was before and the light of peace of Christ rested in his eyes. For he could truly say with all his heart and soul, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me."

The one lesson above all others that I learned from him—how imperfectly I know only too well—was that such a life of complete self-sacrifice for the love of Christ in obedience to his call, cannot be lived without a daily inner discipline that involves long silent times of prayer and solitary communion with God. For he literally "walked with God," on his long wanderings to and fro, up and down the length and breadth of India. That was what the peace in his heart, which shone out so brightly in his face, always betokened.

When this "suffering" aspect of the vine and its branches has been realized to the full, even then only half of the great lesson has reached us. For the ultimate symbol of the vine is that of joy rather than pain. Joyous and fruitful sacrifice—the "cup running

over with gladness," the "wine that maketh glad the heart of man"—this is what the vine implies. Therefore, at the very hour when Christ faced his bitter Passion, he is represented as first sharing with his disciples his own exceeding joy. "These things," he says, "have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full."

While it is a cruel sight, in vine husbandry, to see all the branches cut back to the stem and left bare of leaves in the cold of winter, there are few scenes more refreshing to the eyes than the exuberance of new life when it quickens,

". . . breaking forth in bud,
Joyous and green, and exquisite of form,
Wreathed lightly into tendril, leaf and bloom.
Yea, the grace of the green vine makes all the land
Lovely in springtime; and it still grows on
Faster, in lavishness of its own life,
Till the fair shoots begin to wind and wave
In the blue air, and feel how sweet it is."

And when the grape season comes, with its purple fruit, in the autumn, the sight to the eyes is more refreshing still.

So is our Christian life, if along with the discipline of pain we draw our new joyous strength, as Sadhu Sundar Singh did, from the life-blood of the True Vine. "Wherever God is," he writes, "there is heaven. God is present everywhere, therefore heaven is everywhere. God's true worshipers are happy everywhere, under all conditions, in pain or comfort, among friends or enemies, in this world and in the world to

come. They live in God, and this *is* the kingdom of God.”²

He used to speak of this inner joy as being sometimes almost greater than he could bear, and of the great relief of tears in such moments of excess. “I know not why,” he cried, while in the midst of a great tribulation, “but my heart was so filled with joy at the time that I could do nothing but sing and preach.”

Pascal’s “*Joie, joie, joie, pleurs de joie*” (“joy, joy, joy, tears of joy”), which he wrote down in the midst of his deepest mystic experience of Christ, tells the same story.

Kagawa, threatened with total blindness, lying for months in the dark with scorching pain in his eyes, writes: “Health is gone. Sight is gone. But as I lie forsaken in this dark room God still gives light. At the center of things there is a Heart. On yonder side of darkness there is light. To me all things are vocal. O wonder words of love! . . . God and every inanimate thing speak to me! Thus, even in the darkness, I feel no sense of loneliness. . . . Prayer continues. . . . In the darkness I meet God face to face. . . . I am being born, born of God. . . . I am constantly praising God for the joy of the moments lived with him.”³

We turn from the Far to the Near East and listen to the closing words of Henry Martyn, at Tokat, in Armenia. He had in earlier days cried out, “Let me

² *The Spiritual Life* (Macmillan), p. 69.

³ *Kagawa*, by Axling (S. C. M. Press), pp. 175-177 (abbreviated).

burn out for Christ." And when the end came, in utter solitude and desolation, he wrote, "They brought me to a stable-room and my fever increased; the heat in my eyes and forehead was so great that the fire almost made me frantic. I entreated to be carried out of doors, but was not attended to. At last I lodged my head on the damp ground and slept. . . . Preserving mercy made me see the light of another morning. I thought with sweet comfort and peace of my God—in solitude my Companion, my Friend and Comforter. Ah! when shall time give place to eternity? When shall appear the new heaven and new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness? There, there, shall enter in nought that defileth."⁴

Words such as these can never die. They live on from age to age, keeping aflame the torch of sacrifice, which is handed on from one generation to another in Christ's name.

Kagawa is a "modern" of the twentieth century. Henry Martyn lived more than a century ago. Kagawa was born of non-Christian parents in Japan: Henry Martyn was born in a Christian home in England amid all the fervor of the Evangelical Movement. Yet their words and prayers, their love and sacrifice, their suffering and joy, are almost identical. They meet together in one spirit, "in the tender mercies of Jesus Christ."⁵

One more glorious example, full of spiritual beauty, may be taken from the Evangelical Revival itself,

⁴ *Henry Martyn*, by G. Smith, pp. 511-513.

⁵ *Philippians 1. 8.*

where this overflowing joy, realized to the full even in the midst of pain, was the one dominant note sounded so often in the lives of humble men and women who had found Christ as their Saviour, until at last the great multitudes in different lands were struck with wonder and amazement at the spiritual power made manifest. The submerged and the outcast, the sinner and the profligate—those who had been neglected and left to perish by their fellow men—joyfully and triumphantly awakened into a new life, as one awakes from some terrible disease and recovers health and strength and joy in living anew.⁶

The story, so powerful and so startling in its beauty, has often been told—the tens of thousands gathered under the cold, frosty sky to hear the new preachers of salvation; the gaunt and grimy miners standing motionless in awe, while the great tears traced white furrows down their cheeks as they heard of the love of God and repented of their sins; the houses of drunkards and profligates transformed and breathing only purity and peace; the mute lips and saintly faces of the preachers as they were stoned and wounded by the mob; the eager burning charity of the converts, spending itself in acts of kindness on their persecutors. Since the time of Saint Francis of Assisi there had been nothing like this seen in Europe. We may go even back to the apostles themselves for a time of such spiritual fervor of joy and love and purity of heart.

⁶ In what follows I have abbreviated from my book, *Christ and Labour*.

Two scenes may be given here from the lives of the two great leaders. The first is on the hill of Walsall, where the aged Wesley stands, almost beaten to death with savage blows from the mob, his white hair streaming in the wind, his lips moving in silent prayer, while over him, stirred at last to pity and repentance, stand a prize fighter and a butcher, keeping back the crowd. The second is the picture of Whitefield when a fallen woman crept up to him to touch the hem of his garment, and to put a tear-stained letter into his hand, in which was written: "What shall I do to express my thanks to my good God? If you have any regard to a poor, blind, naked wretch, who is not only dust but sin, you will not reject my request, that I, even I, may forsake all to persevere in a virtuous life."

The message of the Methodists was the message of the suffering Christ—"who loved me, and gave himself for me." The movement spread beyond Great Britain, not only through Europe but abroad throughout the world; it crossed the seas and produced an equal devotion and enthusiasm in America. It even traveled with the early settlers to the newly settled lands of South Africa, Australia, and New Zealand, creating new springs of joyful life in Christ.

Last of all, there is the simple utterance of a Russian peasant pilgrim, who did not even place his name on the manuscript that he left behind with an old monk of Mount Athos, so little did he think of himself and so much of Christ. "Prayer," he writes, "brought me ever-increasing joy, so that many times

over my heart overflowed with a measureless love for Jesus Christ; and from this sweet spring soothing streams poured through all my bones. The memory of Jesus Christ was so stamped upon my mind that I felt a joy that cannot be expressed. It sometimes happened that for three days and three nights I entered no human habitation, and I felt a thrill as though I were alone on earth, alone, an abandoned sinner, before the face of a merciful and benevolent God.”⁷

It is true also that far beyond the boundaries of Christendom the pure in heart, who seek God, find him with serene joy, according to his good promise. Kabir, that greatest of the Northern Indian saints, cries from the depth of his heart, “Joy forever! No sorrow, no struggle! There have I seen joy, filled to the brim, perfection of joy!”⁸ We may thank God with all our hearts when we find how universal this note is in every mystical faith, and cherish every one of these great sayings of the saints.

But there is found in Christ himself, and in those who follow him along the royal highway of the cross, a strange and beautiful intermingling of suffering and joy that gives a new note in the glorious harmony of heaven’s music; and this new note of joy in suffering, when once it has been learned, can never be forgotten. It haunts the memory of mankind. It is surely the “new song” before the throne, which only those can

⁷ Arseniew, *Mysticism and the Eastern Church* (S. C. M. Press), p. 67.

⁸ *Kabir*, by Rabindranath Tagore (Macmillan), p. 24.

sing who are “redeemed from the earth” and “follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.”⁹

We ourselves, who are not saints and heroes but ordinary men and women, stand often amazed and almost disheartened as we gaze at the heights of spiritual vision which these devoted lovers of Christ were able to reach on their upward course. But the joy may be ours also, if we are only able to realize afresh that the same life stream of the True Vine runs through all the branches, small as well as great.

For we are “God’s husbandry.” “My Father,” says Jesus, “is the husbandman.” And it is his good pleasure, in every age and among all sorts and conditions of men, to choose the weak things of the world and things of no account for his own gardening work. For thus it is clearly seen that the excellency of the grace that is given is of God and not of us.

⁹ Revelation 14. 3, 4.

CHAPTER XII

I HAVE CALLED YOU FRIENDS

“This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth: but I have called you friends.”

A SHORT while ago I went to see my friend, John White, in Kingsmead Close, who is seriously ill,¹ and asked him, “What kind of a night have you had, John?”

“I am afraid,” he answered, with a tired look, “I had a good deal of pain.” Then his face lighted up, and with awe and reverence in his voice he added these words, “But while I was lying awake, Charlie, I had a wonderful time; for I kept on thinking over that great promise of our Lord, where he says, ‘I have called you friends.’ Just think of it!”—his voice broke down as he went on, “even if he had called us his servants, that would be much more than we deserve. But he has called us friends. Only think what that means—to be called a friend by him!”

My mind went back at once to the days in Cambridge when my college tutor was suffering from

¹ See Preface, p. 12.

the same illness and bearing the same pain. He had wished me to take from him to the poor suffering people in the college mission, at Walworth, his farewell message. "Tell them," he had said to me, "that at the holy communion there came home to me the thought of Christ the True Vine, with his life running through all the branches. In spite of all my unworthiness, I could realize at that solemn service that I was still a living branch of the Vine. For though the outward man in me is perishing, the inner man is being renewed day by day."

It was at that last farewell before he died that he told me how the words which followed in Saint John's Gospel, "I have called you friends," had been to him, during his pain, the most wonderful help of all. He had often remembered them in the long watches of the night with exceeding comfort.

I told all this to John White, and he said to me, "Yes, indeed, it is a marvelous comfort, Charlie, when you are ill, to have a friend like that! There's no friend in the world like him. He is with you all the while. He never leaves you nor forsakes you."

He quoted to me some favorite lines of his from the Methodist hymn book:

"Be gone unbelief; my Saviour is near,
And for my relief will surely appear.
By prayer let me wrestle, and he will perform;
With Christ in the vessel, I smile at the storm."

The tears were in his eyes as he spoke to me about his Saviour, and he asked me to excuse his weakness

in thus giving way to his emotion: it was due, he said, to the physical strain of his long illness. But the tears were in my own eyes also as we went on to speak together about the Love that had called us by the dear name of "friend," and we joined in prayer that we might learn to love and serve him more perfectly.

The older I grow in years, the wonder and the joy increase when I see the power of these words of Jesus to move the human heart. To the rich and poor alike, to the learned and ignorant, they bring with them a message of peace and love. They are "spirit" and "life"; and the results that follow are manifest. In these farewell chapters of Saint John we can almost hear his voice, just as we did that morning when we remembered his great word, "I have called you friends," for as we prayed together he was with us.

It is quite true that often in the fourth Gospel it is hard to distinguish where the evangelist is expanding the central word of the Master by adding words of his own. But that does not seem to matter at all. For the words of the Gospel, in these farewell verses, seem to rise far above the realms of space and time. They come to us from that "mansion" of the Spirit where Jesus himself continually abides. They flow on, lingering in the mind long after the sound of the words has died away.

Often I have found it very helpful indeed to repeat these verses aloud to myself in times of solitude and quiet prayer. They are so haunting that they are easily remembered; and as we say them over to ourselves, with hearts at rest, they seem to bring us to

the very threshold of the presence of the Lord whom we love and worship. I can say without any question that in my own experience I have known that presence in the remembrance of these great words of the Gospel, and it has carried me on my way rejoicing. But the heart must be prepared and made ready as a guest chamber to receive the Lord. Otherwise, as he stands at the door and knocks, we ourselves shall be over-laden with the "care of this world" and shall not hear his voice when he calls.

The awe that rises in our hearts when the knowledge dawns at last that he has said to us, "Ye are my friends," passes on into confidence and joy. That one word "friend" breaks down each barrier of reserve, and we have boldness in his presence. We bring forward, like Thomas and the rest, all our doubts and fears, and he invites us, saying, "Come unto me and I will give you rest." And so with thankfulness and joy our hearts go out in love to meet his love.

And what a love that is! "We love," says Saint John, "because he first loved us." We soon learn by experience how true this is in our own lives. For his love creates ours. We have not chosen him, but he has chosen us. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us." Our love comes direct from him and he welcomes it as we give it back.

There is a chapter in the second book of the *Imitation of Christ* called "Of the Friendship of Jesus." It has been a great help to me personally, along with the chapter which precedes it, called "Of the Love of Jesus Above All." The words are very simple and

the thoughts are very simple also. We can feel in them how, long ago in the Middle Ages, the old recluse Saint Thomas à Kempis set down each sentence which came out of his own experience of his Master with deep love in his heart. His love overflows, and yet it is stern in its demand for sacrifice.

"When Jesus is present," he writes, "all is well and no labor seems difficult; but when he is absent, the least adversity is found insupportable. . . . He that findeth Jesus, findeth a treasure of infinite value, a good transcending all that can be called good: and he that loseth Jesus loseth more than the whole world, for he loseth the heavenly life and light of his own soul. That man only is poor in this world who liveth without Jesus; and that man only is rich with whom Jesus delights to dwell." And again he writes, "Jesus is to be loved for himself: Jesus alone is to be loved without reserve and without measure; because, of all that we can possibly love, he alone is infinite in goodness and faithfulness. For his sake, and in the power of his love, thy enemies are to be dear to thee, as well as thy friends: and let it be thy continual prayer for all, even for thy enemies, that all may be blest with the knowledge and love of him."

The author of the *Imitation* rightly lays stress on our friendship with Christ being proved by deeds rather than by words. In this he closely follows Saint John and every New-Testament writer. The first age of the church was a Puritan age, in spite of its overwhelming freedom and joy.

Here also, in these verses, the sovereign test of deeds

is applied to love by Jesus himself. "Greater love," he says, "hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you."

It is now more than fifty years since my dear father gave me this verse out of the New Testament, as the one verse which he wished me specially to keep in mind as I grew up. He told me that it had been his own favorite text when he was a boy, and therefore he would like to hand it on to me. He called it, if I remember rightly, "the ideal of a Christian gentleman." Thus it became a text which was very dear to me also; and the memory of my father still lingers in it, like some old fragrance, whenever I read it over in the Bible.

He would at any moment gladly—oh! how gladly!—have laid down his own life for Christ's sake. His love for Christ was passionate. That I always knew full well. It shone in his face. His utterly generous nature, with its unclouded vision of Christ's love, made even the thought of sacrifice a joy to him; and when he did things for others there was such a genuine pleasure about it that those he served seemed more to be doing something to please him than he to please them.

One of the happiest of all the memories I have is of a long quiet talk at home, as he sat in his armchair by the fireside, after I had come back from South Africa with good news about the successful conclusion of the Indian struggle. The last relics of the old bad indenture system had virtually been abolished in

Natal, because the draft agreement was already signed between Mahatma Gandhi and General Smuts. My father was full of happiness when I told him the whole story.

His health had been sorely shattered by my mother's last illness. She had passed away while I was out in South Africa. This had been a blow from which he had never fully recovered, because my mother had been all in all to him throughout his long life, and now at the end he was left alone. My two sisters were with him, taking my mother's place, but his loneliness was very great notwithstanding.

His sorrow had made him very gentle and more lovable than ever; for the child nature had come back in him, as often happens in old age. He spoke to me about my mother's goodness, and how she had shown all through her life that "greater love" in sacrificing everything she had for others. He quoted Christ's words with deep feeling, saying that she had truly laid down her life in her great love for us all.

Then he said to me (these are the words I can best of all remember), "You know, Charlie, when I was young I wanted to convince everybody by argument. Things were so perfectly clear to my own mind that I felt quite certain I could make others see them also. For this reason I used often to get into heated discussions and speak on public platforms, with the idea that if only I could put things forcibly enough, they must carry conviction with them. But in these latter years, since I have been laid aside from more active work by these infirmities of old age, I have been

thinking a good deal. And, especially since your mother died, I have been remembering her silent loving service, how beautiful it was and how much more fruitful than mine. Now I can see that Saint John was right. He goes deepest of all—deeper even than the other writers of the New Testament. For what he says in so many words is this, that love is first and love is last, because God himself *is* love."

He repeated the three words slowly one by one, "God *is* love. God *is* love." "Do you remember, Charlie," he went on, "how Saint John goes on to say that *everyone* that loveth is born of God and knoweth God? Your Indian friends out there in South Africa, who have shown such wonderful sacrifice—just as you have told me—they may not be Christians in name but they love God, and God loves them, and they are accepted by him as his own dear children. You see my faith has become much more comprehensive while I have silently sat here and thought about these great subjects."

The letters which I received from him week by week after this, on my return to India, right on to the end of his life, spoke often about this larger hope, that all mankind of every race and creed would be brought within the embrace of God's love at last in the heavenly kingdom. He wrote about it also in many of the verses he used to compose at this time. This fuller vision and wider outlook came to him in the golden sunset of old age, and it was very beautiful to witness. It is easy to call down fire from heaven, and most of us want to do this when we are young, as a

short way with our opponents. But Jesus rebuked the sons of Zebedee and said, "Ye know not what spirit ye are of."

What I have here written down about my father and mother serves to make clearer the real meaning of this "greater love" which we find in Jesus himself. For friendship to him meant just that—nothing less than that—a love strong as death, so deep that no sacrifice was too great for it, no difficulty too hard, no obstacle too high.

There is a simple narrative about true human friendship told by my friend, Leslie Weatherhead, which has clung to me ever since I heard it, owing to its beauty.² The story is told of two soldiers in France during the Great War who had become dear comrades in the trenches. One of them, after an unsuccessful night sortie, was found to be missing. Then a cry was heard from No Man's Land. His comrade recognized his friend's voice. He eagerly asked his commanding officer if he might go out and bring his friend in. "You can go," said the officer, "but it's not worth it! Your friend is probably dead by this time, and you will throw your life away." The young soldier did not wait for a moment. He went out at once and brought his friend back. When the trenches were reached at last his friend was found to be dead and he himself was mortally wounded. But a gleam of light was in his eyes as he lay dying. He turned toward the officer and said with joy: "Sir, it was

² It is told in a little pamphlet called *The Presence of Jesus* (Epworth Press).

worth it! When I reached him he looked up and said to me, 'I knew you'd come.' "

"It was worth it." This surely is the measure of the "greater love" which reveals to us the heart of Christ himself. For we were out there in "No Man's Land," and he came. He died—to bring us back. We were "worth it" to him, because we were his friends.

Just this "extravagance" of the love of Christ makes all the difference. I have already written much about it, calling to remembrance the broken alabaster box of ointment, "very precious," and relating that act of love to the washing of the disciples' feet, wherein a similar lavish deed of love was set before us.³ Yes, "it was worth it," for it is always just that something beyond the expected which touches the heart and creates a new life when all seems to be dead. We recognize its beauty at once in a Saint Francis of Assisi or a Saint Clare. We know it in a moment when we meet it in literature, or hear its note in music, or catch its gleam in a human face. It unlocks hidden doors of the soul which are fast barred to everything else.

One evening in my life I can never forget, for this very thing suddenly happened, in its own peculiar way, in my own experience. My friend, Willie Pearson, had gone by steamer to the north of the main island in Fiji, when we were there together, and I waited behind at Suva. That day I had gone a short distance up the river Rewa to Nausori. A haunting anxiety about him had come over me all through the

³ See *What I Owe to Christ*, p. 201; Chap. II, in this book.

day—one of those nameless fears that I could not shake off—and I was waiting for his return on the morrow when I should be back in Suva. Suddenly I was called to the telephone, long before the time when he was expected, and I went to get the message with alarm, fearing possibly some bad news. It was Willie; he laughed across the wire with his own delightful laugh and called out "Charlie." Then he told me how he had walked across the island in order to give me a surprise, instead of coming round by steamer. It was a journey rarely undertaken in those days, and he had come on foot most of the way. It was an extravagant thing to do but was just like him. Now he was already close at hand and all my vague unrest was at an end.

We spent the afternoon together, and just before sunset a letter came for each of us by the ocean mail from Rabindranath Tagore—the first we had received since we had left India. We went away together to a quiet spot overlooking the river to read our letters, while the sun went down with all the solemn glory of the tropics. An inner unity and peace came into both our lives which could never pass away. The very strain of anxiety I had been through, and his own adventurous journey, made the overflowing love and joy in our hearts all the greater. We knew more than ever, then, what friendship really means.

It means sacrifice. It implies the "greater love." No friendship can ever come to fruition without that! But it means also sacrifice with understanding. "The servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth." But the

friend does know. Jesus would take us with him into the very meaning of his own suffering and tell us all the secrets of his own heart of love. That is the highest privilege of friendship. This he gives us. Therefore we are called to suffer with Christ, not aimlessly and without knowledge but with a full, understanding heart and a loving will. We come back once more to the perfect words of the *Imitation* with its royal highway of the cross.

“Jesus,” says this old saintly writer, “hath many lovers of his kingdom, but few bearers of his cross. All are disposed to rejoice with him, but few to suffer sorrow for his sake. Many follow him to the breaking of the bread, but few to the drinking of his bitter cup.” And a little later on he writes, “Drink freely of thy Lord’s bitter cup, if thou desirest to manifest thy friendship for him.”

There is no part of the whole story of the Passion more full of pathos than the incident where our Lord longed so intensely for the sympathy of his friends in the garden of Gethsemane and they were not able to give it to him, but failed when the test of friendship came.

“My soul,” he said, “is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me. . . .” “And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing but the flesh is weak.”

It may be that again and again when the test comes

to ourselves, we shall fail likewise. But our Friend will not forsake us. He will go on still trusting us, still proving us, still asking us the question thrice over, "Lovest thou me?"

And if we can say from the depth of our hearts, even after many failures, "Lord, thou knowest all things. Thou knowest that I love thee," he will take us back, not only into his service but into his friendship; and the pledge of that renewed friendship will be given to us in the two simple words—"Follow me."

CHAPTER XIII

A LITTLE WHILE

“A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father. Then said some of his disciples among themselves, What is this that he saith unto us, A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me: and, Because I go to the Father? They said therefore, What is this that he saith, A little while? we cannot tell what he saith.”

AHENEVER I have read over to myself, in the silence, these arresting verses from Saint John’s Gospel concerning the “little while” when Christ’s presence would be manifestly with us, and again the “little while” when his withdrawal from us would be felt most deeply, they have seemed in a remarkable manner to be a miniature of my own life in him. For there has been with me the same heart-hunger which those disciples had for his continual presence, and the same troubled spirit when that presence has been withheld.

All through the long years, since I gave my heart to Christ, this “little while,” with its broken light, has continued. Thus I have known with intimate understanding the meaning of Saint Bernard of Clairvaux’s beautiful lines,

“Our restless spirits yearn for thee,
Where'er our changeful lot is cast;
Glad, when thy gracious smile we see,
Blest, when our faith can hold thee fast.”

And from the depth of my heart, again and again, I have gone on to pray the concluding prayer:

“O Jesu, ever with us stay,
Make all our moments calm and bright,
Chase the dark night of sin away;
Shed o'er the world thy holy light.”

Sadhu Sundar Singh could tell me, from his own personal experience, about the peace of God which shone brightest of all in his heart when he was in the midst of persecution and affliction almost greater than he was able to bear. After incredible suffering in a fetid prison at Ilom, in Nepal, he wrote these glorious words: “I lifted up my heart in prayer to God and he sent me such heavenly peace, into my soul, that I began to sing his praises.” The Sadhu’s supreme devotion to Christ, his Lord and Saviour, shone always steadily and brightly “like the pure light of a lamp, in a windless place, burning before the shrine.” In times of great excitement and provocation he was always calm and serene. He seemed to live in the presence of his Lord while the outward things of the world went on around him leaving him unmoved.

Such an experience—so deep in its intense inner realization—has not been mine. The peace in my own heart, which Christ bestows, has only come to be realized intermittently amid continual failure,

owing to inner weakness hard to overcome. Therefore it has been with me, as it was with the first disciples, a "little while" and I have not seen him; and again a "little while" and the vision has returned.

During certain periods of my life also, when I have felt his presence with me as they did, I have seemed to see everything so clearly and have cried out: "Lord, now speakest thou plainly and speakest no proverb. Now I believe!"

And then he has turned his face toward me in the silence and asked me wistfully: "Do you really now believe? Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, when you will leave me alone." And while I have vehemently protested, "Lord, I will lay down my life for thy sake," I have known, almost as the words were uttered, that if the test came, there and then, I should fail.

And I have failed. Things have gone wrong, within and without, but especially within. My heart has become troubled and discouraged with the sense of repeated disappointment. Anxiety has increased. My whole inner mind has become clouded and perplexed. At last, with those disciples in that upper room, I have even turned aside from him for a moment and begun to ask, "What is this that he saith unto us, 'A little while'? We cannot tell what he saith."

But he, the Great Teacher, who has been giving me all the time his own lessons of trust and patience and perseverance, has known these very questionings which have troubled me. He has been bearing with them as a friend who longs to be understood. He

will not take with me the lesser relationship of Master and servant, wherein the servant does not know what his Lord is doing. For he has called me "friend"; and as a Friend he makes plain his own meaning, revealing his purpose.

And then, ah! then, there has come silently flowing back, like the tide of the great ocean, his own boundless love into my heart, and all doubts and fears have been purged away. The dark night of the soul, with its troubled dreams, has vanished, and my eyes have been opened to the light of a new dawn. I have known once again that "his compassions fail not; they are new every morning." The very air I breathe, the sky above me, the earth at my feet—all nature now seems to be bathed in a glorious light, transfigured by the joy that is in my own soul.

What I have thus written down is hardly figurative at all. It is—as nearly as I can describe it—an exact picture of my own experience; and it seems to echo the refrain of these verses concerning the "little while." Others to whom I have made acknowledgment of this "withdrawing" of his presence have told me the same thing. Their experience has been similar to my own. For a "little while" all is as clear as clear can be. But again a "little while" and all is clouded over. Christ's face seems to be veiled from us and our prayers seem to have no answer.

At the very first when this happened to me I used to think that it was due to some impurity or insincerity lingering on in my own life and unsubdued. I remembered the word of the Lord Jesus, that only

the pure in heart shall see God. But later on I found out that, while this indeed might be the case and a humbling of the soul before God was needed, yet at the same time there were certain trials of faith to be gone through which might actually demand the apparent withdrawal of his presence. For if I was to grow at all and not remain a weakling, unable to make any venture for his sake, I must learn this lesson also of standing alone.

At Cambridge I can remember someone asking me, "Can you trust God in the dark as well as in the light?" That question arrested me. At that moment I was ready to answer "Yes" without any hesitation. But I have learned since that, even when the spirit was thus willing, the habits of earlier days had kept my will too weak, and no mere impulsive answer would carry me forward into the truth.

Then there came consciously before me what I have often called to myself "Love's Way." How it all happened I do not know, and I may have some difficulty in explaining what I mean. But in a thousand unremembered incidents I found out more and more that love was the secret of his presence and also of his friendship. The truth of Tolstoy's perfect short story, "Where Love Is God Is," brought this home to me, and I found, further, that the words might be changed round and remain equally true, for "where God is love is," since God is Love. Here, then, was the way to be with him. Above all, as I have often related, I found his presence where he told us he was always to be found—among the poor and needy, the sick and

afflicted. Whatever was done to the least of these his brethren was done unto him.

As I worked this out in the practical things of life (for true love is not a mere sentimental emotion), it made me understand more clearly the new commandment of love, so often repeated in different forms by Jesus in these farewell chapters.

“By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.” “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.”

“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.”

In that “greater love” was the heart of the secret of his friendship and his presence. This became more and more clear as life went on.

Thus, after much questioning and searching, there came to me at last the joyful understanding that I was in the School of Jesus; that he was trying to teach me this lesson of sacrificial love by his own perfect example. He was guiding me step by step up the steep ascent out of the failures and sins of the past into the higher and purer air. The difficulties encountered were opportunities for me to trust more perfectly and to follow more closely in the footsteps of my Guide. There was a searching discipline going on which could only be completed by the withdrawal from time to time of the Teacher’s hand, so that it might be clasped more firmly and securely. Looking back, I can see that just as the struggle was becoming

too hard to bear alone there has come once more the touch of his hand in mine and the strong word of his presence, "Be of good cheer."

So with each one of us who are his disciples the same assurance is gained, until at last we seem almost to know our lesson by heart. Then as each fresh trial comes to us, even though it may appear in a strange form, we recognize its value, for we know that we are on the "king's high road"—the royal highway of the cross. As we press forward the words of the *Imitation* greet us with their tender note which has now become full of gladness: "There is none other way to life and very inward peace but the way of the cross. . . . Walk where thou wilt, seek whatsoever thou wilt, thou shalt find no higher way above, nor surer way below, than the way of the holy cross. . . . Turn to the heights, then to the depths, turn within, turn without: everywhere thou shalt find the cross. . . . If thou bearest the cross it will soon bear thee and lead thee beyond the reach of suffering, where God shall wipe away all tears from thine eyes."¹

Dr. R. F. Horton has given us, out of a deep personal experience of sorrow, the same truth in his own beautiful way. "As a Christian," he writes,² "I have come to a clear perception of this fact, which is illustrated by my whole life: God is dealing with us in a way of discipline and training which requires that life should never seem complete: and yet he tempers every sorrow, breaks every calamity, sends reliefs and en-

¹ *De Imitatione*, ii, 12.

² *Autobiography*, p. 43. Allen & Unwin.

couragements with such a set purpose that the chastisement can always be recognized as the work of Love. No joy is allowed to last long without some balancing of pain or sorrow or loss. No trouble ever comes which is not accompanied by certain compensations. As the outcome of long and crowded years I have learned as age comes on to believe implicitly in God's goodness, whether joy or sorrow be the experience of the moment."

He tells a story of his early days at Oxford, when the presence of Christ was very near to him after his conversion and he had learned the power of conquest over sin in his own life. His teacher in Philosophy was T. H. Green, and a close personal relationship grew up between them.

"Never can I forget," writes R. F. Horton, "the expression of T. H. Green, when he found out one day that I had a real and vivid faith in Christ. His own faith was philosophical and ethical; but Christ, as a person, had been dissolved by criticism. 'You are very fortunate,' was the brief intense comment."

How great that good fortune is, to which T. H. Green so wistfully referred, I can personally bear witness along with a multitude of sincere souls in every age which no man can number. For I have found in Christ's friendship the one single support that has never failed throughout all trials and temptations. Life itself would have been entirely different if the sense of Christ's presence had been absent and the joy of his friendship had been unknown. It is true, indeed, that I have failed from my side to keep that

sacred tie of his friendship unbroken, and times without number I have been unworthy of his love; but his own great blessing has been given back to me in spite of all, and his love has never let me go.

Henry Drummond was one of those men whose very face, with its inner light of Christ, shed a radiance round him everywhere he went. I have met those who lived with him, and I have seen their own eyes light up with joy as they have spoken about his goodness. One who knew him very intimately said to me: "I have only known one man whom I could call Christlike in the deepest sense of the word, and that was Henry Drummond."

In his two short books, *The Greatest Thing in the World* and *The Changed Life*, he has told us, with transparent humility and truth, the secret of his own life. The friendship of Christ, experienced as an inner reality every day and every hour, so completely changed his character that he became a reflection of his Master. His own favorite verse in the New Testament, which he always quoted from the Revised Version, was this: "We all, with unveiled face, reflecting as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed . . . from glory to glory, even as from the Lord the Spirit."³

He himself all unconsciously reflected as in a mirror the glory of his Lord, and men could see in him a vision of the Christ.

He tells the story of a young girl "whose perfect grace of character was the wonder of all who knew

³ 2 Corinthians 3. 18.

her." Round her neck she wore a locket which she never opened. It contained the secret of her whole life. When, on one occasion, in a moment of unusual confidence, it was opened to show to one of her companions, these words were found written inside, "Whom having not seen, I love." Her life in Christ, whom she loved, was the secret of her beautiful character. Christ had made her what she had become.

Once on a great occasion Henry Drummond sought to give to a large audience of young men and women in Edinburgh the very best that he had to offer. So he quoted to them the words of a living statesman of highest intellectual power and attainment, whose name, however, he did not mention. The quotation ran as follows:

"I want to speak to you to-night only a little, but that little is concerning the sacred name of Christ, who is my life, my inspiration, my hope, and my surety. I cannot help stopping and looking back upon the past. And I wish, as if I had never done it before, to bear witness, not only that it is by the grace of God, but that it is by the grace of God as manifested in Christ Jesus, that I am what I am. I recognize the sublimity and grandeur of the revelation of God in his eternal Fatherhood, as One that made the heavens, that founded the earth and that regards all the tribes of the earth, comprehending them in one universal mercy; but it is the God that is manifested in Jesus Christ, revealed by his life, made known by the inflections of his feelings, by his discourse and by his deeds—it is that God whom I desire to confess

to-night, and of whom I desire to say, 'By the love of God in Christ Jesus, I am what I am.'

"If you ask me precisely what I mean by that, I say, frankly, that, more than any recognized influence of my father or my mother upon me; more than the social influence of all the members of my father's household; more than all the social influences of every kind, Christ has had the formation of my mind and my disposition. My hidden ideals of what is beautiful I have drawn from Christ. My thoughts of what is manly, and noble and pure have almost all of them arisen from the Lord Jesus Christ.

"For more than twenty-five years I have gone instinctively to Christ to draw a measure and a rule for everything. Whenever there has been a necessity for it I have sought—and at last almost spontaneously—to throw myself into the companionship of Christ; and early, by my imagination, I could see him standing and looking quietly and lovingly upon me. There seemed almost to drop from his face an influence upon me that suggested what was the right thing in the controlling of passion, in the subduing of pride, in the overcoming of selfishness; and it is from Christ, manifested to my inward eye, that I have consciously derived more ideals, more models, more influences, than from any human character whatever.

"That is not all. I feel conscious that I have derived from the Lord Jesus Christ every thought that makes heaven a reality to me. All my conceptions of the progress of grace in the soul; all the steps by which divine life is evolved; all the ideals that over-

hang the blessed sphere which awaits us beyond this world—these are derived from the Saviour. ‘The life that I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God.’

“That is not all. What the summer is compared with all its earthly products—flowers, and leaves, and grass—that is Christ compared with all the products of Christ in my mind and in my soul. All the flowers and leaves of sympathy; all the twining joys that come from my heart as a Christian—these are to me what the flowers and the leaves of summer are compared with the sun that makes the summer. Christ is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, of my better life.

“When I read the Bible I am conscious that the fruit of the Bible is Christ. That is what I read it for, and that is what I find that is worth reading. I have had a hunger to be loved of Christ. You all know, in some relations, what it is to be hungry for love. Your heart seems unsatisfied till you can draw something more toward you from those that are dearest to you. There have been times when I have had an unspeakable heart-hunger for Christ’s love. My sense of sin is never strong when I think of the law; my sense of sin is strong when I think of love. It is when drawing near to the Lord Jesus Christ, and longing to be loved, that I have the most vivid sense of unsymmetry, of imperfection, of absolute unworthiness, and of my own sinfulness. Character and conduct are never so vividly set before me as when in silence I bend in the presence of Christ, revealed not in wrath but in love.

I never so much long to be lovely that I may be loved, as when I have this revelation of Christ before my mind.

"In looking back upon my experience, that part of my life which stands out, and which I remember most vividly, is just that part that has had some conscious association with Christ. All the rest is pale and thin. Doctrines, systems, measures, methods, seem to have withered and fallen off like leaves of last summer; but that part which has taken hold of Christ abides."

It has been necessary to shorten this testimony even more than Henry Drummond has done; the witness to Christ shines out clearly in every word. Drummond closes this anonymous quotation with the words, "Can anyone hear this life-music—with its throbbing refrain of Christ—and remain unmoved?" I can answer for myself that it moved me so profoundly that I longed at once to pass it on to others.

"Till we have lived like this," cries Henry Drummond, "we have never lived at all." In the deepest sense that is no exaggeration. For the life that is life indeed is to be found in him.

I have known one who was bound hand and foot by a besetting sin which he could not shake off by his own unaided strength. It was slowly dragging him down. He was crude and unformed at that time in his spiritual ideas, but he came beneath the spell of Christ's friendship, surrendering himself heart and soul to Christ's love as he sought his Saviour's forgiveness. Immediately, the amazing influence of Christ's

presence began in him its own transforming work. One could almost see a visible change taking place, so rapid was its effect. For his character had found a new center in Christ to which everything was now referred. He had many falls and lapses, but never became disheartened. His one purpose in life was to be worthy of Christ as his friend.

"We love," says Saint John, "because he first loved us." Those who truly love Jesus know inwardly what that means in their own lives. "I had an unspeakable heart-hunger for Christ's love"—thus the speaker whose testimony I have quoted expressed it. Just as Christ's own love for us creates that heart-hunger in us, even so his love also fulfills it. For in the great passion of his friendship our whole life is raised to a higher power. Old evils are consumed in the fire of that love. As we set our affections on things above, the things that are below cease to hold out any attraction for us. We become a "new creation" in Christ Jesus.

If it is said doubtfully and sadly that this is mere imagination after all—an empty dream—and that we are feeding ourselves on fancies, then we who have known this transformation in our own lives are bound to bear witness that it is not a dream at all but the most real thing in our daily experience, without which life itself would not be worth living. We can bear witness also that the gift is there, ready to be offered and received.

To accept Christ's offer of friendship we must count the cost. It will mean sharing in his suffering:

“ ‘Hath he marks to lead me to him,
If he be my guide?’
‘In his feet and hands are wound prints,
And his side.’

“ ‘Is there diadem, as Monarch,
That his brow adorns?’
‘Yea, a crown in very surety,
But of thorns.’ ”

But in the heart of that suffering there will be a joy
and a peace which the world can never take away.

CHAPTER XIV

THE ANGUISH

“A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.”

DIVINE love is such a radiant and glorious thing that our first childish impulse makes us ask the question, Why should there be any suffering and sin at all in God’s beautiful world? For sin is utterly abhorrent to him; and even suffering, in its worst forms, seems altogether contrary to divine goodness.

Jesus himself, whose heart was the most childlike and innocent among the children of men, seems to have shared to the full this amazement over the vast problem of evil. It came before him in the garden of Gethsemane and clouded the light of his Father’s love in the black darkness of Calvary.

Those who have lived saintly lives, very close to their Saviour in love and sacrifice, have told us how they too have been called upon to pass through a strange horror of amazement, a “dark night of the soul,” which has brought them very close to their

Lord's agony, when he cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

They have known personally something of that "forsaking," and they have spoken of an anguish which has taken away all divine comfort, leaving their hearts dry and desolate. Sometimes the burden of the world's pain seems laid upon them. The agony of suffering comes over them unawares, like the pain of a woman in her travail. It has assailed them from without, they tell us, rather than from within, as if the hosts of evil were encamped round about them and the angel of God's presence brought no light at all to lead them on their way. They read in the gospel story something which tells of a sudden change in our Lord's conflict with the powers of evil, that seems to bear some resemblance, on a far vaster scale, to their own lesser experience.

No story could be brighter with the freshness of early youth than the opening of the gospel narrative, where Jesus the Carpenter of Nazareth calls from their fishing boats by the Sea of Galilee his band of young disciples. He stands forth, clad with the strength of his young manhood, to proclaim the new dawn of his Heavenly Father's kingdom.

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me," he cries, "because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised. To preach the acceptable year of the Lord."

The scene of his early ministry reflects the joy of the message he had come to deliver. He stands out in the sunshine of the hills to preach the glad tidings to the poor. He is in the boat, on the tumultuous waves of the sea, bidding his comrades be of good cheer, when the storm suddenly descends. He is present at the marriage in Cana, changing the water into wine, and by the side of the widow of Nain, restoring to life her only child. It seems as though the words of the psalm had come true at last: "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

His message itself was filled with the same abundant joy. For the Father loved all men and women as his own sons and daughters. Even though they had sinned and gone into a far country they were still his children and his love would draw them back again to his arms. He sent his sunshine and his gracious rain upon the evil as well as the good, upon the just and on the unjust. He loved those who hated him and did good to those who despised him. His forgiveness was immeasurable. He had the heart of a little child and welcomed into his kingdom those who had the childlike spirit of wonder and innocence, of purity and love. God's tenderness was as boundless as his forgiveness. Not a sparrow fell to the ground without his knowledge, and the hairs of our head were all numbered.

Those aspects of nature which represented silent growth were also at this time most prominent in Christ's parables of the Kingdom. The seed grows

secretly, first the blade, then the ear and then the full corn in the ear. The grain of wheat sown in the good ground may bring forth even an hundredfold. The mustard seed springs up and spreads out its branches. The flowers of the field grow without toil or care; so must be those who seek the kingdom of God. In all this we have a world of beauty, singularly free from the thoughts of cruelty and horror, malice and hatred, suffering and death.

But as the end draws near, the change is sudden and vast. Christ speaks of the lightning flash of the Day of Judgment, striking across the dark clouds like a sword swiftly unsheathed. He warns his disciples about the destroying flood, with its unbridled waters, suddenly sweeping away mankind. He represents in symbol the dark eclipse of the sun and moon and the falling of the stars. Prophecies are uttered of earthquakes in divers places, the waves of the sea raging, while men's hearts are failing them for fear and for looking after those things that are coming on the earth when the powers of heaven shall be shaken. He foretells his own tragic death and warns his disciples beforehand that the only way to follow him is to bear a cross.

Here there is no peaceful development, but stark tragedy. The very symbols employed are full of elemental conflict. The forces of nature are disclosed in their most destructive mood.

To be true, therefore, to the whole range of Christ's words, we are compelled to take note of two strangely diverse things. Nature indeed is to be loved, in no

ascetic mood, by those who have learned from Christ himself to consider the lilies and to rejoice in the love and goodness of the Heavenly Father who cares for the tiniest of his creatures with an individual love. All this is fundamental and vital. Nevertheless, for every disciple who would follow his Master faithfully, there is set forward with uncompromising directness the hard, heroic path of suffering which has to be pursued right on to its tragic close. Whatever may be the concern of others, for Christ's disciples there is only one concern—to give up all for his sake. As shadows darken along the road there will remain one joy only, that of following him to the end.

One powerful saying may throw some light upon this darkest human problem. As Christ sees destruction approaching he exclaims, "Wheresoever the carcase is, there will the vultures be gathered together." A moral scavenging and clearing away of dead refuse has to be undertaken on God's earth if life itself is to remain pure and sweet. Even while the good harvest is gathered in, there must be a burning up of the chaff and weeds. The cleansing of the soil and destruction of the refuse are as essential for the new life as the sowing of the seed itself. The elimination of waste from the human body is just as necessary as the assimilation of wholesome food. There are poisons continually to be expelled, as well as vitamins to be absorbed. "Every plant," he says, "which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up." In certain things, there has to be nothing less than eradication. Yet all the while love

will be the instrument used, even in this uprooting of the evil. "He maketh," says Christ, "his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." Therefore love is to be given even to our enemies. Such is the law of God's kingdom.

But pain that is futile and cruel, evil that is outrageous and monstrous—can any light be thrown here by the gospel of Christ, so that innocent and tender-hearted men and women, who are its victims, may still retain their faith in the love of God and by patience win their souls?

Let me confess, without any shrinking back, that these problems of evil, where evil appears altogether insane and monstrous, have formed by far the most agonizing trial of my own faith. I can hardly imagine what would have happened if I had not learned in earlier years the way of Christ. His love alone has sustained me all through; and only the lessons I have learned from him have made the burden of this pain lighter and its yoke easier to bear. There have been times when I have felt the very foundations beginning to give way. The balance of experience has been upset, and I have known the darkness that is in this life of ours apart from God. But then again the pendulum has swung back with a great revulsion, and I can now bear testimony, after many years of struggle against constant defeat, that there is no logic in the world so true and deep as the assurance of his presence, and in his light we shall see light. For the final answer to all our questionings,

however deep they go, is Christ; because, in his own hour of desolation, he has gone deepest of all and has come through triumphant over sin and death.

There are certain words of Christ and his apostles which speak of these sufferings themselves—so apparently meaningless and cruel—as being nothing less than the travail pains which have to be borne if the birth of the new order of mankind is not to be frustrated. Therefore they are to be welcomed, even with joy, as the messengers of good things to come. Their words explain, also, how death itself carries with it the immortal seed of new and glorious life, waiting to be revealed. When these passages are taken together their symbolism is deeply impressive, and they seem to come near to some of the very things that science is seeking to discover concerning Man and the Universe to-day.

The first is a saying of Christ, repeated in different ways. "I have a baptism," he cries, "to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!"⁴ And again, "With desire have I desired to eat this passover with you, before I suffer."⁵

The picture of the suffering servant in Isaiah was constantly before the mind of Christ as he entered upon his Passion, and there was one phrase that threw a gleam of light into the darkness, for concerning this sufferer it was foretold, "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied."⁶

⁴ Luke 12. 50. Compare Matthew 20. 22.

⁵ Luke 22. 15.

⁶ Isaiah 53. 11.

We seem to grasp here Christ's inner thought, that his baptism of suffering and death was to be the travail of his own soul. It would release the hard shell or outer husk of this earthly body by which he was straitened, so that the seed of the immortal life within might break through. The suffering, which he now more and more expected, was thus to be the anguish of a new birth.

The second passage is still more distinct in its use of the same metaphor. We are told, in Saint John's Gospel, how the Greeks came to Jesus, just before his Passion, and how he saw in them the distant fruit of his labors and declared, "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."⁷ At that very hour, we read, Jesus cried, "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say, Father, save me from this hour? But for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name."

Death is here also regarded as the gateway of new life. The death of the seed is the life of the young plant. The travail of the soul is the birthpang of a new creation. Thus it was said among the early Christians that the blood of the martyrs was the seed of the church.

The third passage is from Saint Paul, where we have the same metaphor of the travail-pains of the new birth, and the anguish with which that birth is effected. We are brought to the final thought of a greater anguish still, which may usher in the new

⁷ John 12. 24.

heaven and the new earth, "wherein dwelleth righteousness." He writes: "The whole creation groaneth and travaleth together in pain until now. And not only so, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for our adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body."⁸

In such passages as these, not only is man travailing in anguish through death to the new birth, but nature herself in her vast cosmic ranges is in anguish, till the new creation is accomplished and the new earth and the new heaven appear.

What has already been mentioned leads us on to this farewell word of Jesus to his disciples in the upper room, which is far the most beautiful of all. For it sums up in a phrase that can never be forgotten the whole process of the new birth. Let us listen to the music of his words.

"A woman, when she is in travail, hath sorrow because her hour is come.

"But after that she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more her anguish for joy that a man is born into the world.

"And ye now have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your hearts shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you."

The anguish is that of Christ's own Passion as well as the disciples' bereavement. Through that darkest hour of sorrow, which was swiftly advancing, the new birth of humanity was to be accomplished.

⁸ Romans 8. 22, 23.

Both in man and nature there appears to be the deep inscrutable need of some ultimate travail-pain, in which Christ himself shares, some agony endured to the bitter end by voluntary surrender which almost takes the form of joy. Only thus can man rise, by a supreme venture of faith, into his full spiritual manhood. Only when the lower life has been abandoned utterly can this higher life be attained.

In this suffering the disciple is not greater than his Master, the servant is not above his Lord. But when the disciple has once ventured on this upward path of sacrifice, so that he, like his Lord, is ready to lay down his life for others, then, as we have already seen, Jesus calls him no longer "servant" but "friend." For the friend alone can know what the Lord does; the servant can only follow blindly without understanding. "Henceforth," he says, "I call you no more servants, but I have called you friends."

In these different ways Christ sets before us the need of the full rebirth of man's soul, through anguish joyfully endured, if the kingdom of heaven is to be truly found within us and the Father's will is to be done on earth. The foundations of that Kingdom are to be laid in sacrifice. "He that shall lose his life shall save it"—this is the divine law.

Age after age, as the Christian centuries pass by, God's house of many mansions has to be entered, in lowly guise, by the same royal highway of the cross. It is the "strait and narrow way" that leads to life and peace. To follow it to the end, we must be prepared at a single word, without a murmur, with joy

in the heart, to surrender father, mother, wife, husband, child, yea, all that a man hath, for the kingdom of heaven's sake. Release comes only when the last sacrifice of all has been made and life itself is offered to Jesus himself, "who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame."

We, who are living nineteen hundred years after that supreme sacrifice was offered, once for all, "full, perfect, and sufficient, for the sins of the whole world," can look back over many generations and bear witness to the truth of this amazing adventure, to which Christ has beckoned us by his own love. There are now in evidence to guide us the devoted lives of saints and martyrs who have sought to "fill up . . . that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ . . . for his body's sake, which is the church."⁹ In the earliest days of all martyrdom for Christ's sake was an ever-present possibility, which might have to be faced by frail women as well as men, if Christ was not to be denied. Yet the thin red line of volunteers for a death, even from wild beasts in the arena, the most terrifying of all, was never broken.

This astounding miracle of the Christian faith, wherever it is true to type, has ever made itself felt as the one witness of Christ that is infallible. The triumphant song of the *Te Deum* praises God for the white-robed army of martyrs as well as for the glorious company of apostles and the goodly fellowship of prophets. Along with great names famous in history for their wonderful devotion to Christ there

⁹ Colossians 1. 24.

has been also the sacrifice, equally true and noble, of countless heroes unknown, who for pure love of Christ and devotion to his name have suffered unto death at his call.

On the other hand, wherever the strait and narrow road of sacrifice has been left on one side and an easier pathway has been chosen, then at once the nerve-center of the Christian life has been severed, and a creeping paralysis has ensued. The salt has lost its savor, the lamp has been hid under a bushel, the Christian Church has become dead and cold.

But even out of such a deathlike state the living Christ has once more risen triumphant, bursting forth from the grave of a dead past in the power of an endless life. The divine impulse from within has carried the new Christian generation forward to ever fresh sacrifice and devotion. For Christ Jesus our Lord is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. His grace never fails us, if only we put our whole trust in his love. The royal banners of the cross go forward.¹⁰

When in our own age we look out on the world, tortured with pain and agonized with fear, where naked force gains cruel victories over gentleness and peace, we who love Christ to the uttermost must be ready at a single word from our Lord and Master to follow him "whithersoever he goeth"; we must be prepared to drink the cup which he drank and be baptized with his baptism of suffering. We cannot turn away and deny him with an oath, saying, "I know

¹⁰ "Vexilla Regis prodeunt." This is the first line of the Latin hymn for Palm Sunday.

not the man." Rather, we shall rejoice to be counted worthy to suffer with him; and at each communion of his body broken and his blood outpoured we shall renew the solemn sacrament and pledge, that we will "show forth the Lord's death until he come."

CHAPTER XV

THE PEACE

“Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”

“These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.”

GHERE are certain creative words which seem to express in a wonderful way the soul of a people. In our own English language one such word is “home.” It binds together those who speak English as their mother tongue in every part of the world. In Eastern languages there is perhaps no more significant word than “peace.” The very sound seems to bring refreshment to man’s heart in the East; and the ideal of peace, as the central feature of the whole religious life, has gained a pre-eminence there which is unique.

This benediction of peace goes very far back in the history of mankind. It formed the closing portion of Aaron’s blessing upon the children of Israel as their high priest. In the book of Numbers we read,

“And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto Aaron and unto his sons, saying, On this wise ye shall bless the children of Israel, saying unto them,

“The Lord bless thee, and keep thee:

“The Lord make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee:

“The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.”¹

The custom in the Near East of using the word “peace” in the daily salutation may have been derived originally from this religious blessing. Even at the present time, when two persons meet, the one who begins the greeting raises his hand and bends his head, saying, “Peace be upon thee,” and the other answers, “And upon thee also be peace.” In the great brotherhood of Islam this formula, in Arabic, has become universal. I have heard it uttered by Moslems in places as far distant from each other as Capetown and Singapore.

It is true that this greeting of peace has become worn by continual repetition—just as “Good-by” has lost much of its original meaning of “God be with you.” But to watch those who still maintain the dignity of ancient usage, as they salute one another before they go in to prayer, is a deeply moving sight. Also when any prophet or saint is mentioned in the course of their conversation, the words “On him be peace” are added.

Not only has the Near East made this word “peace” its own, but in Hindu India also, and in the Far East, where the faith of the Buddha has prevailed, the heart of mankind has adopted this word “peace” as its own

¹ Numbers 6. 22-26.

religious token. The Sanskrit invocation,² "Peace, Peace, Peace," concludes each act of adoration. The whole conception of the religious life is associated with peace.

In a whimsical letter, written from a "skyscraper" in New York, Rabindranath Tagore wrote to me pathetically about his longing to get back to his own "Innisfree" in India, at Santiniketan, the Abode of Peace. He quoted W. B. Yeat's lines:

"And I shall have some peace there, for peace comes
dropping slow—
Dropping from the veils of the morning to where
the cricket sings,
There, midnight's all a glimmer and noon a purple
glow,
And evening full of the linnet's wings."

This dazed sense of rush and hurry and noise, together with a deep longing for inward peace, is universal among the finer spirits who come from Eastern lands to live in the West. At first the bewilderment is overwhelming and the distress acute.

At Santiniketan the boys chant in unison each day, at their united worship, a long invocation of peace upon all creation, seeking also for the same blessing in their own hearts, so that the whole universe may be bathed in an atmosphere of divine peace. I have often joined with the boys in this simple ceremony, and it has brought to my mind the loving attitude toward nature which is seen in the life of Saint

² *Santi, Santi, Santi.*

Francis of Assisi and also among the old Celtic saints. It is an arresting thought that the Celtic West, which has strange ties of kinship with the Aryan East, has used Christ's own name from earliest days as the Peace-giver in its ceremonies of blessing. For instance, in Saint Patrick's "Breastplate," we have the glorious refrain:

"Christ be with me, Christ within me,
Christ behind me, Christ before me,
Christ beside me, Christ to win me,
Christ to comfort and restore me.

"Christ beneath me, Christ above me,
Christ in quiet, Christ in danger,
Christ in hearts of all who love me,
Christ in mouth of friend and stranger."

It would be possible to quote invocations of this kind still used in India to-day where each line begins with the word "Peace." It seems as if these old Celtic saints took up some earlier rime, possibly coming to them from the East, and "christened" it.

While there is no fundamental difference in the inner spirit of the devotees of the love of God in East and West, there is a clear distinction of emphasis; and this great word "peace" not seldom reveals this, for it has attained a far deeper meaning in the East, and its inward realization has been more profound. The fact that perfect calmness of temper in all Eastern lands has become entirely wrapped up with the life of the man of religion—Christian, Moslem, Hindu, Buddhist alike—is a phenomenon worthy of notice.

Even the sheer necessity of speed, which has become a part of our modern civilization and has reached Calcutta and Bombay as well as London and New York, cannot disturb the long-inherited tradition of the religious life in the East.

I have told the story elsewhere how, at a roadside station in Japan, the express train which carried Rabindranath Tagore from Kobe to Tokyo was halted while an old Buddhist priest with his attendant monks came slowly forward to give their gentle salutation of peace to the Indian poet. As the ceremony took place the very air seemed hushed to stillness with a quiet calm which could be felt. Even the railway officials, in their semi-military uniform, who at other times would be hurrying about, speeding up their work, were softened into a devout reverence by the spiritual beauty of the scene. There was something felt there which no lover of the human race could allow to fall into abeyance without making a strong effort to preserve it.

While Rabindranath Tagore has given his own deeply sympathetic warning to the West, with regard to the loss of inward peace which is patently visible on every side, he has also been the first to acknowledge that this inner quality has often become corrupted by the enervating climate and lethargy of the tropics, until it has too often led to mere passivity in the face of intolerable injustice. There is a deadly calm, like a miasma, over many lands in the East, altogether different from the living peace of Santiniketan which I know and love so well.

The Christian faith, at the beginning of its adventurous course, drew lavishly from East and West alike. The new life rushed forth with its current running strong, and it cut its own channels as it surged forward. One of the greatest gifts which it carried along with it from its Eastern home was this gift of peace. The words of the psalm were fulfilled,

“Mercy and Truth are met together;
Righteousness and Peace have kissed each other.”

For the peace of God, which passed all understanding, guarded, like a fortress,³ the hearts of the early Christians, keeping them calm and strong amid all the sufferings they were called upon to endure. The words of Jesus were literally fulfilled, “These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.”

This benediction of peace which Christ left with his disciples was made an integral part of the sacrament of the Holy Communion itself. For in that great service of joy and thanksgiving the kiss of peace was given and received by all those who were present. Slave and freedman, rich and poor, Jew and Gentile, were united in this ceremony of the “Peace,” as it was called, during one of the most solemn moments of worship. Then, as the service closed, the blessing of peace was given also.

What this vital part of the Eucharist meant in the life of the first Christians may be seen from the *Mar-*

³ Philippians 4. 7 (R. V.).

tyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas, which Rendel Harris has edited. Perpetua was of noble birth; Felicitas and Revocatus were slaves. They were cast into the arena together, along with other Christian prisoners, at Carthage, because they refused to deny Christ, their Lord and Saviour. The account of their last moments is one of the most deeply moving stories in early Christian literature. They had passed through the awful ordeal of being exposed to the wild beasts and were about to be despatched by the sword of the executioner in the middle of the arena. But before the act of martyrdom was completed they stood in a group together, side by side in the middle of the arena, and, in the presence of the spectators, gave to one another the farewell kiss of peace, in order (as the historian relates) that they might make perfect their testimony through the sacrament of their Christian faith.⁴

“This kiss of peace and faith and charity,” writes Rendel Harris, “upon which they died, was the true monument and token of the revolution which God was accomplishing in the earth.”

For truly it was nothing less than a moral and spiritual revolution when slave-girl and noble matron could thus offer themselves to the wild beasts together and seal their new-found love in Christ with the kiss of peace before the fatal sword thrust was delivered.

The younger Christian Churches of the East which are now springing up have already discovered these

⁴ *Passio S. Perpetuae*, ed. J. Rendel Harris, p. 68.

farewell chapters of Saint John's Gospel with this last benediction of "Peace." They have, therefore, chosen them as a sanctuary where they may find Christ in the silence. I have entered that sanctuary with them and shared their communion.

There are two hymns which give something of the atmosphere of India as it is felt in Christian worship to-day. One of these is, "In the Secret of His Presence," by Ellen Lakshmi Goreh.⁵ Its childlike naturalness ought to give it an honored place in our worship. Its last lines,

"And whene'er you leave the silence of that happy meeting place,
You must mind and bear the image of your Master in your face,"

have been constantly in my mind while I have been writing this book.

The second has a haunting melody in its original Urdu form. It is called *Jai Prabhu Jesu*,⁶ and has been translated by Charles Foxley, who was one of the Cambridge Mission Brotherhood at Delhi. He has kept very near to the meter and atmosphere of the original. It runs thus:

"Jesu Christ, be thou my security,
Thou my security, Jesu Christ.

"All the sinners that come to Jesus,
He will cleanse them from guilt and impurity.

⁵ See p. 296.

⁶ *North India*, by C. F. Andrews, p. 118.

“Deep the river, and frail the vessel,
Waft me safe to the shore of futurity.

“God of orphans, and Friend of the friendless,
Shine in homes of gloom and obscurity.

“Jesu, shelter me under thy shadow,
Grant me pardon and peace, Lord, and purity.

“Jesu Christ, be thou my security,
Thou my security, Jesu Christ.”

It needs a great leap to turn from these scenes to our own divided and distracted modern world. While I was actually seeking the quiet needed in order to complete this book a friend said to me, “You ought to have called your book ‘Christ in the Storm’ instead of ‘Christ in the Silence’; for the world was never so tempest-tossed as it is to-day, and you are in the midst of the struggle.”

My answer was that Christ’s silent presence ought to be felt even in the most stormy days. But I knew full well the difficulty of writing in such circumstances. Certainly at no other period of my life, except during the World War itself, have I known such troubled days. Yet this, in the end, must test and try what I have written and keep it in touch with human life. For just in these very trials, great and small alike, lies the supreme test as to whether the inward peace which is in my own heart is genuine and comes from Christ himself, or whether it is only a transitory mood, fit for a fair sky and a favoring wind but not robust enough to withstand the tempest.

One sentence which John Wesley writes in his journal, at the end of his voyage across the Atlantic from America, has always clung to my mind: "I have," he says, "a fair summer religion. I can talk well; nay, and believe myself, while no danger is near: but let death look me in the face, and my spirit is troubled."

That was his experience before his final conversion in that little room in Aldersgate Street, when someone was reading Luther's preface to the *Epistle to the Romans*. "I felt," he said, "my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation." After that final conversion and joyful experience of Christ as his Saviour, his whole heart was aflame with burning love and he knew the inward peace that passes understanding. He became fearless in face of difficulties and often met the peril of death itself with serene joy. He passed at last into the presence of his Lord with the repeated words on his lips, as he lay dying, "The best of all is, God is with us. The best of all is, God is with us."

In our huge modern cities to which the population crowds to-day there appears less possibility than before of a sheltered and secluded existence. Christ and his peace have to be sought and won amid the strivings of men, as they hurry to and fro upon the earth. It may be that we are passing through a painful adolescence in human life, before new powers are acquired which will do away with all this noise and dirt and smoke and steam. The birds of the air keep their beauty of poise and silence of movement even in the swiftest flight. Perhaps the day will come when

mankind also will move swiftly and lightly. But that lies in the future. The plainest of all facts for our own generation is this, that our inward peace may be lost altogether unless we are ready to make great sacrifices to retain it. "No soul is rested," says Mother Julian, of Norwich, "till it be noughted of all that is made." We cannot have inward peace while we are clinging to outward things.

The brave spirit of Saint Paul as he faced the Roman world—hardly less crowded and active than our own—became more radiant with peace and joy as he drew near to the time of his death. The Epistles which he wrote from his Roman prison have the two words "joy" and "peace" written across them in his own "large handwriting."⁷ The humble men and women whom he addressed found the same peace and joy while they suffered the loss of all things for the sake of Him who loved them. Their inner life in Christ remained all the brighter in the midst of the very suffering they had to endure.

We must come to Christ, therefore, and ask him, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" And if he calls us to refashion our lives so that we may have a space left, in our crowded days, for prayer and communion with him, we shall make the changes that are needed and surrender the outward excitements that are so distracting. For only as we become at peace within ourselves, in his service, shall we be able to help others who sorely need our assistance.

We read how a young man came running to Jesus,

⁷ For the metaphor see Galatians 6. 11.

and kneeled to him and asked him, "Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?"

Of this young man and no other in the Gospels we are told that "Jesus beholding him loved him." Yet when the Lord invited him to give up his great possessions he went away sorrowful. The outer world held his allegiance when the test came, and Christ's offer of love was rejected.

It may happen to us also that the attractions of this modern life, with its absorbing interest, will be one of the ultimate tests of our own love for Christ. For we cannot claim to love him truly and refuse to do the things that he has commanded. We cannot find his presence in the midst of the active daily life if we have not sought him in the silence.

Jean Nicholas Grou, quoted in J. H. Oldham's *Devotional Diary*, sums up all that I have tried to say in words that need to be pondered over again and again:

"There is no rest," he writes, "for the heart of man save in God, who made man for himself. But how shall we rest in God? By giving ourselves wholly to him. If you give yourself by halves, you cannot find full rest—there will ever be a lurking disquiet in that half which is withheld; and for this reason it is that so few Christians attain to a full, steadfast, unchanging peace—they do not seek rest in God only, or give themselves up to him without reserve. True rest is as unchanging as God himself. It stills all passion, restrains the imagination, steadies the mind, controls all wavering; it endures alike in the time of tribula-

tion and in the time of wealth; in temptation and trial, as well as when the world shines brightly on us. . . . Saint Paul will tell you of a peace which passeth understanding; Jesus Christ tells you of his peace which the world can neither give nor take away.”⁸

That peace within the soul, which remains changeless while the storms beat outside, is to be found only when we have learned from Jesus himself his own meekness and lowness of heart.

“Son,” said Jesus to Saint Thomas à Kempis in his solitude, “my peace dwells not but with the humble and the meek; and it is found only in the exercise of much patience.”

Just in proportion as the love of Christ constrains us, so that we are lost in the wonder of it, shall we be able to forget self-love and learn to be of an humble and contrite spirit. And as that spirit grows within us we shall find the peace of God guarding like a fortress our hearts against all the troubles of the world.

⁸ Second Month, Day 21.

CHAPTER XVI

THE CONSECRATION

“For their sakes I consecrate myself, that they also might be consecrated through the truth.

“Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word.

“That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.”

HE great mystics, both in the East and in the West, have always found joy and comfort in the seventeenth chapter of Saint John. To them it represents, more perfectly than any other writing, that ultimate way of union whereby the soul is brought into the unveiled presence of God, amid the saints in light. It reveals to us the pathway which leads onward to the beatific vision. “That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me and I in thee, that they also may be one in us.”

The “Way of Cleansing” and the “Way of Illumination” have both been traversed in these chapters by the disciples with eager steps, as they have pressed forward to understand Jesus. Then as their spirits have ascended higher and higher, “The Dark Night of the Soul” has for a brief moment clouded their vision. But now at last the “Way of Union” has been reached.

For Jesus, in this last great act of intercession, takes his disciples with him into the inner sanctuary itself where he is one with the Father. He prays for them that their union with him may be no less complete than the unity which he had with the Father before the foundation of the world.

We noticed in a previous chapter how earnestly the Lord had desired to hold this last communion with his disciples. Having loved his own, Saint John tells us, he "loved them to the uttermost."¹ He had drawn them to him, "with the cords of a man, with the bands of love."² That vast love of his, whose length and breadth and height and depth passed all human knowledge, had stooped down to the lowest depth of humility when he had knelt before them as a servant to wash their feet. Now the same love would raise them up to immeasurable heights. He could not soar too high in his intercession for them, as he brought them to the Father; because the Father himself would love them even as he was loved by the Father.

This great and glorious love of his, sown like a seed and planted in the hearts of a handful of weak men and women, was all that remained as he faced death in its most awful form of crucifixion and knew that his last hour on earth had come. Yet to Jesus this love was the one thing for which he had come to earth, first to give and then to win back from men. It was the one meeting-place which had been now estab-

¹ John 13. 1.

² Hosea 11. 4.

lished between heaven and earth, between God and man. More to him than all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them was this love now firmly established in the hearts of this little company of friends. For their sakes he had consecrated himself, so that they also might be consecrated in truth. This, in brief outline, is the whole Gospel "according to John." It tells how that friendship grew deeper and deeper, until these humble fisher-folk and others whom Jesus had chosen became actually one with him, even as he was one with the Father.³

They start with him from the simplicity of their daily life in Galilee as they go up and down together telling glad tidings to poor people. The whole narrative of the early ministry of Jesus is brimming over with joy. What Saint John calls the "glory" of Cana of Galilee is the glory of simple, homely loving-kindness in the midst of a family festival. They pass to and fro, from the waters of the lake to the hillside and from the hillside to the lake. The young disciples are filled with gladness. Their new life of faith and hope is at this time bright with promise. For them to observe fasting rules, like the disciples of John the Baptist, would be churlish and absurd, for this joy was doing its own invaluable work. It was cementing the love between Jesus and themselves.

Very simply and naturally these bonds of love are drawn closer as the first affection deepens. Loyalty and devotion, faith and courage, become stronger as

³ I owe much in what follows to Dr. A. Nairne's beautiful book called *Life Eternal*. See Preface, p. 15.

the wonder of their Master's presence grows upon them and the strange beauty of his character is realized. Now and then they catch glimpses of another inner world of spirit piercing through the outer veil of sense; and they cry out, "Lord, it is good for us to be here." So the early ministry in Galilee moves forward.

Then, like the clouding over of some bright morning which passes on into a stormy noon, the storm clouds gather fast. The harassed days in Jerusalem are altogether different from the sunshine of Galilee. Yet the Master set his face steadfastly, and the disciples follow with awe and amazement. Now at last, as they see cruelty written on the hard faces that confront him, they understand his continually repeated warnings about his followers bearing a cross.

Yet in spite of sorrow filling their hearts, the little company draw closer together as one trial after another is overcome. "Let us also go, that we may die with him," said Thomas; and the others are ready to say the same. When the crowd begins to desert him and he asks, "Will ye also go away?" they answer: "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."

And then at last, after the "sifting like wheat" had taken place, Jesus, in the upper room when all was silent, had been able in his great love to call them, not servants, not disciples even, but friends. For now indeed they had understood and believed.

Just as dear friends gradually grow into one another more and more, even so they had begun to

dwell in him and enter into his divine purpose. They knew now for certain that he came from God and went to God. Therefore, however frail they were and liable to fear, their love was ever growing stronger. Though the time had not come yet when they would be ready actually to die for their Friend, even this would come in the end. For every one of them, except the Beloved Disciple, was to die a martyr's death.

And Jesus had loved them in return as never men were loved before. That phrase, which Saint John uses, so truly expresses it. "Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them to the uttermost." They were his own, whom the Father had given him out of the world. So closely had he drawn them near to himself at last that they had become one with him and he had become one with them. He was the True Vine and they were the branches. So great was his love for them that even at the very moment he was preparing to lay down his life for their sake. Greater love had no man than that; and he was offering it to them with every token of devoted sacrifice.

We, who live nineteen centuries later, can hardly realize the audacity of faith which was demanded from the writer of this Gospel, thus to stake everything on this one single tie of love between a few friends. Yet that is what he did. For, according to John, this and this alone was the foundation on which Jesus built while he remained on earth; and this alone he left behind him when he went once more to the Father.

The great high priestly prayer has its center in

this one thought. The world would in the end believe and know only in so far as this bond of love between Christ and his friends remained unbroken.

If we read very carefully the seventeenth chapter, studying the inner meaning of it all the while, we shall find that it comes to this: A little group of friends, and Jesus in the midst as the One who loves them better than a brother. That love, with all the fullness of the Father's love behind it, will prove so strong that after untold difficulty and suffering it will convince the world. The world shall know; the world shall believe.

The legendary story has often been repeated, which carries this great truth at its center, how Jesus, as he returned to the Father, was asked by those angels who earnestly desire to gaze into the mystery of man's redemption, "What have you left behind to carry out the work?" He answered, "A little band of men and women who love me." "But what if they fail when the trial comes? Will all you have done be defeated?" "Yes," said Jesus, "if they fail, all I have done will be defeated." "Is there nothing more?" "No," said Jesus, "there is nothing more." "What then?" "They will not fail," said Jesus; and the angels wondered as they saw the sublime confidence of love which this betokened.

In that upper room itself the mystical union between Christ and his disciples had now been completed. They had brought to him all their difficulties and he had cleared their minds of doubt. "Now we are sure," they had cried out in their confidence

and joy. "Now we believe that thou camest forth from God." And though this confidence would soon be tested, and would fail at the first, yet courage would come back and in the end their faith, founded on love, would prevail.

Jesus had also told them quite plainly concerning the suffering which was soon to come to them. Men would put them out of the synagogues, and the time might come when whosoever killed them would think that he was doing God service. Love would mean bearing all this with joy for his sake. It would involve, on their part, laying down life itself for him, their Friend. It would mean, on his part, the laying down of his life for them, his friends. But it would also bring with it an inward peace in the heart that could never pass away. Therefore, while they would have tribulation and suffer many persecutions, they must be of good cheer, because he had already overcome the world.

Thus we approach nearer and nearer to the center of that circle of love wherein Jesus Christ and his loved disciples were united. Even while Saint John describes to us those last moments of communion in the upper room, we are led almost imperceptibly onward into that abiding and eternal mansion of the Father—that "upper room" (if we may dare with reverence to use the figure) in the heavenly places where love eternally existed with the Father and was made manifest through the Son.

This, I believe, is the vision splendid of the evangelist as he looks beyond the veil into the life eternal,

This perfected union of love between Christ and his own in the upper room is a divine foretaste of that love which he had with the Father in heaven. It is the symbol of that wider and fuller union of love which is still to come, when the world shall believe and know that the Father has sent the Son to be its Saviour.

“That they all may be one,” Jesus prays; “as thou, Father, art in me and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe . . . I in them and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know.”

There are two sanctuaries—to use picture language in order to describe Saint John’s thoughts—the sanctuary of heaven where the eternal Father abides, whose name is Love, and this sanctuary on earth, the upper room, where love has thus been sealed and perfected. As Jesus “comes” and “goes” from one to the other, the unity between heaven and earth is ideally completed. For at this one point a true bond of union has been formed. Out of that unity, as it is consecrated by death, will spread ever wider and wider areas of divine love, realized in the hearts of men, until at length the whole world shall believe.

“For God so loved the world . . . God sent not his Son . . . to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.”

CHAPTER XVII

THE GLORY OF THE CROSS

“This beginning of his signs did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested his glory; and his disciples believed on him.”

“Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say, Father, save me from this hour? But for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name.”

“Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee.”

GHE more abundant life: the water changed into wine: the “lifting up” which should draw all men unto himself: the corn of wheat which, through death, would bring forth much fruit: the True Vine with its deep-cut branches: the “greater love” of friends—in all these symbols Christ’s glory is revealed through suffering. He came to give life by his own death: his crown is a crown of thorns: his robe of mockery is royal crimson-purple.

“Art thou a king then?” asks Pilate, with scorn and contempt in every word he utters.

“Thou sayest,” replies Jesus, meekly, “that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.”¹

¹ John 18. 37.

This book which I have endeavored to write, aided by the earnest prayers of many loving helpers, is nearly finished. What I am now adding on the cross and resurrection is written to carry our hearts just one degree further forward on these two eternal themes, relating them to the farewell chapters.

Many years ago, when I was at Santiniketan, a letter had come to me from Dame Clara Butt, the great singer, through her traveling companion. She had suffered from a heart-breaking bereavement and had made the journey to India, not to undertake any new professional engagements but to find, if possible, some peace and solace for the trouble that still pained her heart. She greatly wished to come to the Ashram in order to see Rabindranath Tagore, because in his book of poems, *Gitanjali*, he had written words of comfort about death and sorrow.² The poet was recovering from a serious illness, but he at once gladly consented to fulfill her request, and she came to visit the Ashram.

She was able more than once to see Rabindranath Tagore alone and was wonderfully comforted by him. At last the evening had come when she was to return to Calcutta. The poet was reclining on a couch at the edge of the veranda and the darkness had already set in. There was a quiet peace beneath the stars as she sat there by his side; and on this occasion I was able to be present with her. As she began to say good-by, and to thank him for the wonderful consolation he had given to her, she said to him: "There

² See *Gitanjali*, p. 90 to end.

is one more request I have to make before I leave you. Will you not let me sing one song to you here in the quiet of this evening?"

The poet told her how more than grateful he would be if she would do so, because he had all the while been longing to hear her; so she lifted up her voice and sang her song. I had wondered what song she would choose, and when she began my own heart was very deeply stirred, for she chose one of the Negro spirituals which I had heard sung by Negro voices in Alabama, Tennessee, and South Carolina. The words were these,

"Were you there, when they crucified my Lord?
Were you there?
Were you there, when they crucified my Lord?
Were you there?
Oh, sometimes my heart begins to tremble.
Were you there, when they crucified my Lord?"

I shall never forget that song, under the stars that night, in the silence of the Ashram, and the quiet stillness that held all the air when she had finished.

When I lay awake, long past midnight, under those same listening stars, the glory and the beauty of it still lingered—

"Were you there, when they crucified my Lord?
Were you there?"

The memory came to me that while faithful women were there, when they crucified the Lord, men were absent. Only the Beloved Disciple remained at the foot of the cross. No other man was there. And my

mind went on to the thought of the times without number when I had failed to be there just at the moment when the test came. Yet to be there—there and nowhere else—was the true mark of love, the true test of friendship, the true crown of devotion. Not when the hosannas are being sung and the garments and palm branches are being strewn along the way, but when there is scourging and cruel mocking and spitting of contempt and the wild mob fury, crying, “Crucify him! Crucify him!”—Ahl to be there then! That would make life worth living and death worth dying!

But had I the courage when the test came? Should I be with the Beloved Disciple and the faithful women, or with those other good, well-meaning, generous-hearted followers of Jesus who had neither the inner discipline nor the burning love to stand the test?

And my thoughts went on still further to those dear Negro folk of the South in the days of their captivity, when they sang their songs of sorrow in a strange land. They were there, at the foot of the cross, for they had to suffer and knew what cruel suffering meant. Out of that very suffering they had sung this “melody in their heaviness” while “they sat down and wept.”

“Were you there, when they crucified my Lord?
Were you there?”

For he, the Crucified, was one with them, and they were one with him.

And all through that night till the dawn appeared I lay awake under the stars, while memory after

memory surged through my mind, bringing back that refrain, "Were you there?"

We must go continually to Jesus in that upper room when our hearts are troubled; and our souls will receive the peace and joy which he alone can give. But we must not stop there beyond the period of refreshment needed to carry us forward once more on our active life in his service. We must be ready at his word of command to go back into the midst of the strife, where his brethren—the poor, the oppressed, the afflicted—are still suffering, for he is still there, suffering with them in their midst; and in our love for them we show our love to him.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE RESURRECTION DAWN

“Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulcher, wherein was never man yet laid. . . . But Mary stood without at the sepulcher weeping. . . . Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away. Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni.”

WHAT a marvelous Easter it had been!¹ “Christ is risen!” “Christ is risen!” seemed to be ringing out, on Easter morning, from the church bells as they sent up their music into the sky.

After long years spent chiefly in the burning heat of the tropics it has been a benediction to be in my own home again in England for Easter this year. To see once more fields of spring flowers which I had almost forgotten! To watch the sunlight shining through them with all its radiance! And to take the daffodils on Easter Sunday to the grave where my father and mother were laid to rest—all this has been a blessing for which I cannot thank God enough!

There has been an exultant certainty of risen and

¹ The year 1933 is referred to.

triumphant life filling the very air; and the song has gone up from the heart, which the Eastern Church sings in triumph at this season, "Christ is risen!" "Christ is risen!"

"It is the Day of Resurrection; let us be filled with light, O people. Passover of the Lord, Passover! For from death to life, from earth to heaven, hath Christ, our God, led us, who sing the song of victory.

"Come let us drink of the new spring that springeth forth, not from the barren stone but from the grave of the Saviour, a spring of life incorruptible.

"We sing the slaying of death, the dawn of a new life, life eternal. . . . To-day every creature rejoiceth and shouteth with joy: for Christ is risen!

"It is the Day of Resurrection; let us be filled with joy and embrace one another; even unto them that hate us, let us say, 'O brethren, we forgive one another for the sake of the Resurrection.' And so we cry, 'Christ is risen from the dead, overcoming death through his death.' "²

This festival of Easter is the very heart and center of the Christian faith in the Eastern Church; and as the Easter tidings of resurrection joy spread from shore to shore, and the younger churches in India, China, and Japan take up the glorious message of new life and youth and hope, the risen life of Christ will shine forth like the morning, girdling the whole earth. In the West also we must revive among ourselves the same exultant certainty of a risen Saviour, a living Christ, triumphant over sin and death.

² *Mysticism and the Eastern Church*, Arseniew, pp. 41, 42.

Last year, at this season of Easter, I was at Delhi, in India; and I spent Good Friday there also under the shadow of the cross. A gloom was over all the land. Wherever I went, from one Indian home to another, the sense of impotence was mingled with despair. Hopelessness seemed to be settling down on the face of the earth.

In my own life also the shadows had deepened. The season itself was the beginning of the heat. There was the parched, dry atmosphere of the dusty plains. The monsoon rains were still far off. Nature herself seemed to speak of decay and death.

The chaplain at Saint James's Church had asked me to give a message in church on Easter Sunday evening, and I found it extremely difficult beforehand to raise my thoughts above the depressing atmosphere around me. Such was the gloom of failure and disappointment that I hardly knew what to say or how to speak.

Then before the Eastern Communion in the early morning, in the cool of the day, as I sat in the silence of the church, the oppression which had been so heavy upon me was suddenly relieved. For I read over before the service the story of Mary in the garden as she meets her risen Lord. The marvelous beauty of the scene—the dimness of the early dawn, the sheltered garden, Mary's first thought that he was the gardener, the one word "Mary," the immediate recognition, "Rabboni," "my Master!" Surely never was there a more beautiful story told than this! As I read the words and pictured the scene I found the weight upon

my mind, which I had felt all through the week, wonderfully lifted; and I could almost see his form as Mary touched his feet in love and worship. Her tears were turned into joy as she knew that her Lord was not taken away but was with her, by her side.

Even as her tears were turned into joy, so also my own heart was lightened and the gladness of the realization of Christ's presence came back to me in full measure in that Easter dawn. For I could now say, in the midst of all the clouds of darkness enveloping India, "Christ is risen! Christ is risen!" His new and endless life would be given in full measure to the Indian people whom I loved.

After a while, the service of the Holy Communion began, with its glorious Easter Epistle, "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above . . . for ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory."

As the service proceeded, the Easter thanksgiving was offered: "But chiefly are we bound to praise thee for the glorious resurrection of thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord, for he is the very Paschal Lamb offered for us which hath taken away the sin of the world: who by his death hath destroyed death and by his rising to life again hath restored to us everlasting life."

At each pause in the service, as the praise and worship mounted higher and higher, I knew in my heart of hearts that all would be well. For Christ was King of kings and Lord of lords.

When I spoke, on that Easter Sunday evening,

every thought was of Christ. He was the true Gardener who had kept the garden of our souls. He was the true Life-giver who had raised us from the dead. He was the living Saviour who had taken away the sin of the world. In him, who had thus loved us, we could be more than conquerors, and he would be with us all the days even unto the end of the world.

POSTSCRIPT

THE PRACTICE OF PRAYER

 THESE chapters will have been written in vain if we are content merely to remain in the atmosphere of emotional thoughts without attempting to put their principles into practice.

Our Lord Jesus Christ condemned in the Pharisees the self-delusion involved in sentimental acceptance of the formal duties of life without fulfilling those higher moral principles which God had commanded. His own test was always, "By their fruits ye shall know them." Therefore this concluding chapter leads directly to the question: "Lord, what wouldest thou have me to do?"

When the issue is thus faced, with regard to our inner life in Christ and our realization of his presence, we are brought up against the hard facts of everyday experience in our own times and the great difficulty under modern conditions of maintaining faithfully the daily practice of fervent heart-felt prayer. For on the reality of this prayer-life the presence of Christ within the heart depends.

In this postscript, I propose to give certain suggestions of a simple character with regard to the practice of prayer. What is here set down will be in the form of headings to be worked out in practical life accord-

ing to individual circumstances. Conditions differ so much that no literal application of them is likely to be of much use. In this respect, as in other matters, it is true that "The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life."

(1) By far the greatest need in the prayer-life of to-day is to rescue the morning hour for silent communion with God. There may be exceptional hindrances to this, in individual lives, which cannot possibly be overcome and therefore require adjustment. In such instances some other way must be found for meeting this daily need of prayer. But in the normal life to-day difficulties should be removed and obstacles avoided which interrupt this quiet time before the active work of the day begins.

The warning must be given, in a parenthesis, that it is no solution of this problem for anyone to curtail sleep beyond what health requires in order to rise early for prayer. It is impossible without injury thus to "burn the candle at both ends." The real test of self-discipline and moral courage is to be firm about retiring to rest. For in many instances it is far harder to retire to bed early than to get up betimes in the morning, especially when late habits have already been formed.

One of the most beautiful characters I have known, an aged Musalman named Munshi Zaka Ullah, of Delhi, had been so self-disciplined in this respect that, though he was the most friendly and sociable of men, he would make it known beforehand at any evening gathering that he would be obliged to retire at a

certain hour. He would never miss for a single day his morning communion with God in prayer. He rose each day before the dawn.

As a Christian I have often been put to shame by his life of consecration. Our Lord Jesus Christ has said, "For their sakes I consecrate myself, that they also may be consecrated." In the light of the supreme consecration of the cross it ought to be practical for us so to rule our lives so as to devote one morning hour to him.

"Let each man," said the apostle Paul, "be fully persuaded in his own mind." Nothing is further from my thoughts than any attempt to lay down rules. There must always be difficulties under such artificial conditions as those which exist to-day, and no rule can cover them all. But the healthy and natural way of life is surely to rise with the dawn; and the greater number of difficulties will give way if only we endeavor to do so.

(2) Let us assume, therefore, that we have made up our minds to keep faithfully the morning hour. We are earnestly seeking to hear the voice of our Good Shepherd as he calls us by name and leads us forth for the day's work. How, then, shall we act in such a way as to succeed best in what we undertake?

One vital factor in such "seeking and finding" is solitude. All the day long we are likely to be occupied with persons and things. The world will be with us "late and soon." Therefore let us keep this first hour of the day, not in company but in silence with him. To some the most solitary place may be

some spot in their own home. In my own life I have found that the greatest of all aids to solitude has been to go out into the open air and remain walking up and down in some quiet place, thus seeking to realize God's presence.¹ In the country this is easy to do, but in the town there are difficulties to be encountered. These, however, can be partly overcome if we make up our minds to win through. Sometimes even to sit at an open window, where one can see the sky, may be a help.

Each one of us has to find out by experience what is the most helpful means of keeping a quiet time and then to fashion his own life accordingly. I know from personal experience the great hardships which exist in the crowded houses of poor people, and among them it is hardest of all to find a way to silence and solitude. We may be quite certain that where these difficulties are insurmountable God helps by other means those who earnestly seek him.

(3) Recollection throughout the day is one of the best means of keeping up that silent "prayer within the heart" which is essential for the full growth of spiritual life.

There needs to be practiced constantly, in simple ways, a mental withdrawal from outward things for a few brief moments. "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty."² The opening words of the Lord's

¹ Thoreau writes: "It is always as if I met some grand, serene, immortal, infinitely encouraging, though invisible Companion, and walked with him."

² Psalm 91.

Prayer said mentally have been a great help to me in this direction. There is a poem from *Gitanjali* whose first verses have been a personal aid toward keeping my heart true and pure.³ It begins, "Life of my Life!" There is also the joyous method of taking some word of Christ, such as "I am the good shepherd," or "I am the true vine," in the early morning, during the quiet hour for meditation, and then brooding over it again and again throughout the day. But this method will be brought forward more fully under the next heading.

There is a very noble passage in a prayer, in *Gitanjali*, "Give me the strength to raise my mind high above daily trifles." It is the same thought that is contained in the words of the apostle, "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God."⁴

When Bishop Lightfoot was near to his death his chaplain asked him what he was engaged in at the moment. He said, "I am feeding on a few great thoughts."

Perhaps the best of all inner recollections is to remember someone who deeply needs our prayers owing to suffering or sorrow or temptation. It is always the unselfish thought that drives out self.

This temper of the recollected mind cannot be learned quickly: but when it has become, by constant practice, almost a second nature, it gives balance to

³ See p. 297.

⁴ *Colossians* 3.

the whole character. It makes the daily life one continuous act of prayer. It helps also to give that inner guidance from God in the smallest details, as our thoughts instinctively rise to him seeking an answer. It calms our spirits. It keeps the peace of Christ in our hearts.

Here, I am sure, the East has much to teach us in the West. In the course of this book I have referred many times to Sadhu Sundar Singh, because, as a Christian saint, he had this gift of silent withdrawal from the world to quite an exceptional degree. Everyone who met him in the West noticed this. Ordinary people who saw him said how wonderfully Christlike his face was. His serenity on all occasions came from the practice of inward prayer and constant retirement from the world.

It is strange to me to notice how little at present we realize in the West that we are in danger of actually losing this faculty of recollectedness and serene quietude, owing to the crowding up of our time with unnecessary things. That impressive phrase of the book of Genesis, "We walked with God," implies the constant withdrawal into the realm of the Spirit where the Father has his worshipers.

One I have known—J. W. Hoyland, of Kingsmead, Selly Oak—who truly "walked with God." There is a portrait of him, with a far-away look in his eyes, as if he were seeking, "a better country, that is, an heavenly."⁵ Yet his whole life was carried on in the active world of men and things. He always gave me

⁵ Hebrews 11. 16.

the sense of one who lived the inward life of prayer throughout the busy day.

When I write later on, as I hope some day soon to do, the life of Sadhu Sundar Singh for English readers, this characteristic will come out clearly. For it is this lesson more than any other that I long to draw from his example.

(4) Great central thoughts, which may be remembered day by day, are of the highest practical value for the recollected mind. These farewell chapters of Saint John's Gospel have been like a treasure-house to me in my own life. Matthew Arnold's sonnet, called "East London," expresses what they mean:

"I met a preacher there I knew and said:

‘Ill and o'erworked, how fare you in this scene?’

‘Bravely,’ he said, ‘for I of late have been
Much cheered with thoughts of Christ, the Living
Bread.’ ”

If the different chapters of this book are able to call fresh attention to the beauty of these central thoughts in Saint John's Gospel, they will not have been written in vain.

(5) In the evening, before retiring to rest, the mind and body are tired. While in the freshness of the early morning, after sleep is over, the heart of man longs to praise and worship God for all his goodness and mercy and loving-kindness, in the same way at night we are likely to feel most of all our mortal weakness, our failures and sins; and as we feel their burden most, we shall also realize the need of the divine love

and forgiveness. We shall not forget to thank him also.

Our evening prayers, therefore, are likely to be more of the character of confession and thankful, humble dependence upon God's mercy. While there will often be difficult times when anxiety for those we love, or other causes, may prolong our intercessions, yet normally we shall retire to rest after a brief period of prayer, with the expectation of rising early on the morrow to glorify his name.

(6) It is becoming clear that Sunday in each week, as a day of rest and refreshment, wherein our souls may be renewed and our spirits strengthened, is losing much of its power. It needs, with most of us, remodeling afresh in the light of Christ's words, "The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath." The Christian Church, at the first, adopted the old Hebrew principle of an interval of rest each week, while changing the day of the week from Saturday to Sunday. We have to work out the whole problem afresh as to the *method* by which we may obtain that vital spiritual rest which the soul of man requires. This principle of a day of rest needs more than ever to be emphasized in these crowded times. But the old legal idea of the Sabbath has gone, never to return.

(7) When prayer thus envelops the whole life, it will become a creative, energizing power. It will "give life" to others for whom we pray.⁶ The virtue will go out from us in healing and blessing.⁷ The

⁶ 1 John 5. 16.

⁷ Luke 8. 46.

words of the Epistle of Saint James will be found true, where he says, "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."⁸

I have not attempted, in these brief notes, to write about united, corporate prayer, where the two or three are gathered together in Christ's name and he is in the midst. On some other occasion I hope to be able to write a book called "Christ and Prayer," which has been slowly shaping itself for a very long time past in my own mind. Here I can only deal with the problems of the individual life.

(8) While the daily life of prayer is likely to go on quietly, with its silent advance and ever-deepening consciousness of Christ's presence, there will also come great moments of luminous realization. We shall see Christ clearly and plainly, and our hearts will rejoice, and our joy no man can take from us. It may happen that for a long time we shall have no open vision. But then at last, as Wordsworth tells us, in "The Excursion,"

". . . a step,
A single step, that freed me from the skirts
Of the blind vapor, opened to my view
Glory, beyond all glory ever seen
By waking sense, or by the dreaming soul."

Just as in nature there are slow and silent adjustments going on all the while, so it is with the Christian life. These silent processes are molding us gradually. But then, as in nature also, on one day

⁸ James 5. 16.

there comes a sudden and almost miraculous leap forward. One of the greatest blessings of the Oxford Group Movement has been to bring out into the full light of day these upward movements of the spirit. Men and women, of fine, earnest character, have been "freed . . . from the skirts of the blind vapor" which had enveloped them; and then there has been opened up to their view "glory beyond all glory ever seen." I have known personally many such, and it is a joy that cannot be expressed to watch the new creative life of the spirit surging within them and expressing itself in action.

(9) As we continue the daily practice of prayer, there will be evident more and more clearly in our lives the guiding hand of God. I cannot possibly speak about "guidance" with any fullness here, but I would call attention to a remarkable book by Dr. J. Rendel Harris,⁹ which has passed through many editions. This divine guidance is undoubtedly promised to those who ask in Christ's name, but Christ's promise is dependent on abiding in him and fulfilling his commandment of love.

As I close these notes, with a fervent prayer that they may be of service, I would return to the one supreme thought of Christ himself, the Lord and the Master, who stoops down in his great humility to wash our feet and speaks in the silence of the upper room his parting words to our doubting and troubled hearts.

⁹ *The Guiding Hand of God*, by J. Rendel Harris.

"A new commandment I give unto you," he says to us. "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." "In my Father's house are many mansions: I go to prepare a place for you." "Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full." "I am the vine and ye are the branches." "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." "Ye are my friends." "Peace I leave with you." "For their sakes I consecrate myself."

Age after age Christ has taken these words of the evangelist and brought peace and joy through them to troubled hearts. The more we use them in our quiet hour of communion, the more they come home to us; and as they enter into our lives they transform them into his likeness.

For Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day and for ever. His Holy Spirit is the Comforter—the Strengthener of our spirits, the Revealer of all the truth, the Lord and Giver of life; and through his Spirit Christ himself will be with us in our daily struggles to overcome manifold temptations.

NOTES

ON THE COMPOSITION OF THE FOURTH GOSPEL

IN addition to what I have written in the text of this book concerning the composition of the fourth Gospel, it may be well to state more fully in a note to what conclusion I have come while residing in the East and watching the way in which great schools of religious thought (called Ashrams) are developed.

The actual title of the fourth Gospel in the Greek is "according to John." What does this phrase really mean? Who was the actual composer of the Gospel? Was it John himself or some younger person writing from his dictation? Who was John?

While I have lived in India I have seen how a revered teacher, in his old age, instinctively gathers round himself a group of young pupils who carry on the great tradition of their master. This custom is a very ancient one, still retained in every Eastern country.

In a similar manner I picture such a young group gathering at the feet of John the Aged at Ephesus. He seems to me to have been left behind there by the providence of God, as the last disciple who had "seen the Lord." This accounts for the emphasis on seeing and hearing and even handling the Word of Life with which the First Epistle begins. The closing chapter of the Gospel, with its exact detail, also reveals this background. The disciple had been told that he should "tarry" till the Lord came. The saying went round that he should never die. He corrects this by repeating the very words of Jesus about "tarry-

ing." The young group add their own record to his: "This *is* the disciple . . . and *we know* that his testimony is true."

Out of the midst of such a group one individual invariably comes closer in spirit to the teacher than the others. I have seen this actually happen myself, and my own experience first made me think over Saint John's position at Ephesus. The revered master enkindles the heart of one outstanding young pupil most of all. Fire kindles fire. So the torch is handed on. In the Old Testament the young Elisha prays to Elijah, "I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me."

Surely, this beloved teacher who had "seen the Lord" must have found one special pupil who understood him more deeply than the others. While the others merely listened, this one's spirit was aflame. Also, if this aged teacher came to Ephesus from Judaea, he would need, in Asia Minor, every day, a devoted interpreter who could assist him with his simple, elementary Greek and explain to the Greeks his Jewish mind. Such a pupil would become a true son in the faith, able to carry on the message of the Lord to a still younger generation.

If this is at all a correct account of those incidents that lie behind the closing chapter of the Gospel, we can understand how this young interpreter and pupil at Ephesus treasured, with a heart full of love, the old teacher's memories of that Word of Life which his hands had actually handled. He would mold them into a Gospel which should meet the questionings of his own day.

Whether John the Aged was the son of Zebedee, or another John more closely linked up by birth with Jerusalem, is not, after all, of very great importance compared with the one fact that this old disciple at Ephesus had "seen the Lord."

Such a conclusion as this which I have put forward would solve many difficulties. It was a great encouragement to me to find that Doctor Nairne had already reached the same solution of the problem from an entirely different angle of vision. The fourth Gospel, as he rightly says, has all the radiance of youth. It is the Gospel of a New Age. It looks forward into the future. There are, indeed, signs of an old man's memory at the back of it, which can be seen in peculiarly small and accurate details. An increasing agreement among scholars also points to the fact that behind the mystical language of this Gospel, which colors every part of it, there are certain historical features of great importance which supplement the earlier gospel record. The knowledge of Jerusalem and its environment is minute and points to an eyewitness.

But the whole conception of the Gospel is amazingly forward-looking. It leaps right into a new world far beyond that of Judæa. It reveals an intimate knowledge of the whole Greek outlook on life. It meets the new problems of the larger faith. Such a Gospel seems almost to demand a group of young disciples, with one pure spirit among them aflame with the insight of love.

The words of Jesus which this Gospel records are not like the direct speech of the earlier Gospels. They are set down in the form of meditations, each of which appears to expand some original utterance of the Master to his disciples. This expansion reveals the mind of the evangelist himself, but the central thoughts are those of the Lord Jesus, carefully treasured by the disciple who had seen and heard the Lord. As Dr. J. Drummond convincingly pointed out many years ago, these short sayings, which are the kernel of the long discourses, are singularly akin in spirit to the great words of Jesus which have come down to us

from the earlier Gospels. They do not contradict these words but add to their significance.

Browning's poem, "A Death in the Desert," represents in a wonderful manner a great poet's insight into those marvelous days when only one last disciple survived. It is still, in modern poetry, the greatest effort of high spiritual imagination as it strives to reach the inner truth of this surpassing theme. The substance of Saint John's Gospel could hardly be stated more tersely than in the lines which the poet puts into the mouth of the aged John before his death:

"To me, that story—ay, that Life and Death,
Of which I wrote, 'it was'—to me, it is;
—Is, here and now: I apprehend nought else.

.

"For life, with all it yields of joy and woe,
And hope and fear—believe the aged friend—
Is just our chance o' the prize of learning love,
How love might be, hath been indeed, and is;
And that we hold thenceforth to the uttermost
Such prize despite the envy of the world,
And, having gained truth, keep truth: that is all."

Though the local and the temporal are present in the Gospel, it is the eternal that the evangelist keeps ever in his mind's gaze.

Purely critical questions have purposely not been discussed in the main chapters of the present book, each of which deals with one central thought from our Lord's teaching. This does not imply that the historical background is unimportant. Far from it. One of the finest works that is being done in our own time by modern scholars is this sifting of evidence, both external and internal, which may throw light upon the Gospel text. We have to draw, with loving

care, the one true portrait of Jesus as he lived with his disciples. No pains can be too great for such a task, and no analysis too minute.

But we must remember, all the while, that however far we may carry our research in this critical direction, such an analytical process can never be complete in itself. "Behind all the contemporary factors," writes Dr. E. F. Scott, "there is an abiding message, and everything else is subsidiary to its nature and meaning."¹

For, while Jesus stands at the center of human history, he also transcends it. There is that in him which escapes all analysis. It is his own person. That goes far beyond the minute scrutiny of the scholar and the critic. Christ is universal. He lives with us to-day.

To put this vital truth in a directly personal form, Jesus is to me the living Christ, speaking to my inmost heart here and now. He is present with me each day in my daily life. He takes up these words, which the first disciples placed on record in their Gospel narratives centuries ago, and makes them his very own. He is his own interpreter as he speaks to my heart, saying "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." He says to me each day, "I am the Bread of Life." He is the "Good Shepherd," who calls me to-day by name and leads me forth, if only I will hearken to his voice.

¹ *Studies in Early Christianity*, p. 17.

OTHER WITNESSES TO SAINT JOHN'S GOSPEL

THREE other witnesses may be cited who have declared their indebtedness to Saint John's Gospel in their own lives. The records appear to me to have a unique value and will be read by many of my readers for the first time.

(1) In his *History of England* Froude relates the touching story of the death of Bishop Fisher on Tower Hill. He had been condemned by Henry VIII to death when he was past eighty years of age. Froude relates that on the morning of his execution he dressed himself for his "marriage day," as he called it, and set out from the prison. The distance to Tower Hill was short, and he tottered feebly along past the prison gates, holding a closed copy of the New Testament in his hands. The crowd flocked round him, eagerly seeking his blessing, for they regarded him as a saint. Then he was heard to pray to God that, as the New Testament had been his best comfort and companion in every hour of affliction during his earthly life, so now it might afford him some special strength for this last and greatest trial of all, when he went to meet his death. He therefore besought the Lord that its pages might speak to him a word of comfort, as from the Lord Jesus himself. Then he opened the book at random, and his eyes lighted first of all on the words which come at the beginning of the seventeenth chapter of Saint John. "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent."

Here was the direct answer to his prayer for special strength; and the aged bishop continued to repeat the

words of Saint John's Gospel to himself as he went forward with Christian fortitude to meet his death.

(2) In the same Reformation period, but at a later date, the great name of John Knox, in Scotland, may also be mentioned. All through his last illness, his biographer tells us, while he lay dying in Edinburgh, those chapters of the Bible which he loved most of all were read to him. The two chief passages were the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah and the seventeenth of Saint John's Gospel, "in which I had first cast anchor," as he himself had finely expressed it. On the last day of his life, though rapidly sinking and unable to speak much, he was able to listen to these passages which gave him such spiritual comfort, and at five in the afternoon "he requested his wife once more to read the seventeenth of Saint John; and though he seemed to sleep, he signified that he had heard every word. Asked to give a parting sign that he was at peace, he lifted his hand, and apparently without pain passed quietly away."¹

(3) When the poet Wordsworth was approaching old age, after the stormy period of his youth was ended, he wrote a letter to Sir George Beaumont containing the following words: "Theologians may puzzle their heads about dogmas as they will, the religion of gratitude cannot mislead us. Of that we are sure; and gratitude is the handmaid to hope, and hope is the harbinger of faith. I look abroad upon nature; I think of the best part of our species; I lean upon our friends, and I meditate upon the Scriptures, especially the Gospel of Saint John, and my creed rises up of itself, with the ease of an exhalation yet a fabric of adamant."

¹ P. H. Brown, *Life of John Knox*, Vol. II, p. 287.

IN THE SECRET OF HIS PRESENCE

In the secret of his presence how my soul delights to
 hide.

Oh how precious are the lessons that I learn at Jesus'
 side.

Earthly cares can never vex me, neither trials lay me
 low,

For when Satan comes to tempt me to the secret place
 I go.

When my soul is faint and thirsty, 'neath the shadow
 of his wing

There is cool and pleasant shelter and a fresh and
 crystal spring.

And my Saviour rests beside me and we hold com-
 munion sweet,

If I tried I could not utter what he says when thus
 we meet.

Only this I know: I tell him all my doubts and griefs
 and fears.

Oh! how patiently he listens and my drooping soul
 he cheers!

Do you think he ne'er reproves me? What a false
 friend he would be,

If he never, never told me of the sins which he must
 see!

Would you like to know the sweetness of the secret
 of the Lord?

Go and hide beneath his shadow: this shall then be
 your reward.

And whene'er you leave the silence of that happy
 meeting place,

You must mind and bear the image of your Master
 in your face.

—*Ellen Lakshmi Goreh.*

TWO POEMS FROM "GITANJALI"

Life of my life, I shall ever try to keep my body pure, knowing that thy living touch is upon all my limbs.

I shall ever try to keep all untruths out from my thoughts, knowing that thou art that truth which has kindled the light of reason in my mind.

I shall ever try to drive all evils away from my heart and keep my love in flower, knowing that thou hast thy seat in the inmost shrine of my heart.

And it shall be my endeavor to reveal thee in my actions, knowing it is thy power gives me strength to act.

Here is thy footstool and there rest thy feet where live the poorest, and lowliest, and lost.

When I try to bow to thee, my obeisance cannot reach down to the depth where thy feet rest among the poorest, and lowliest, and lost.

Pride can never approach to where thou walkest in the clothes of the humble among the poorest, and lowliest, and lost.

My heart can never find its way to where thou keepest company with the companionless among the poorest, the lowliest, and the lost.¹

¹ Reprinted by permission of The Macmillan Company, New York.

BOOKS THAT MAY HELP THE READER

THOSE who have entered into the spirit of these pages will be glad to know what books may be referred to if the study of St. John's Gospel is to be carried further. Among a very large number of books I can recommend the following as most helpful:

Little Flowers of St. Francis. (Dent & Co.)

The Imitation of Christ. Thomas à Kempis.

Revelations of Divine Love. Mother Julian of Norwich. (Methuen.)

The Practice of the Presence of God. Brother Lawrence.

The Golden Sequence. Evelyn Underhill.
(Methuen.)

The Mystic Way. Evelyn Underhill. (J. M. Dent.)

Mysticism and the Eastern Church. N. Arseniew.
(Student Christian Movement.)

Gitanjali. Rabindranath Tagore. (Macmillan.)

A Devotional Diary. J. H. Oldham. (S.C.M.)

The Incarnate Glory. W. Manson. (J. Clarke & Sons.)

St. John, *The Moffatt New Testament.* Macgregor.
(Hodder & Stoughton.)

St. John in Recent Criticism. W. F. Howard.
(Epworth Press.)

St. John, *International Commentary.* Bernard. 2
vols. (T. & T. Clark.)

Life Eternal. A Nairne. (Longmans, Green & Co.)

The Guiding Hand of God. Rendel Harris.
(Thomas Law.)

The Cross Moves East. J. S. Hoyland. (Allen & Unwin.)

The Greatest Thing in the World. H. Drummond.
(Hodder & Stoughton.)

The Religion of Jesus. Kagawa. (S.C.M.)

Sadhu Sundar Singh. Parker. (S.C.M.)